THE IMPACT OF A MULTICULTURAL CURRICULUM UPON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: PERCEPTIONS OF POTENTIAL DROPOUTS WHO GRADUATED FROM NORTH CAROLINA'S FIRST EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

TONY B. WATLINGTON, SR.: The Impact of a Multicultural Curriculum upon Student Achievement: Perceptions of Potential Dropouts who Graduated from North Carolina's First Early/Middle College High School
(Under the direction of Dr. William Malloy)

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to identify and describe former students' perceptions of how a multicultural curriculum impacted their academic achievement. These 10 Black graduates formerly were drop-outs or potential drop outs who graduated from North Carolina's first early/middle college high school, The Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown (EMC-GTCC-J). This school, like other Learn and Earn early/middle college high schools across the state, is required to have a rigorous and relevant curriculum, to serve a diverse student body, and to decrease drop outs and increase four year graduation rates (NSP, 2004a).

Through student interviews using Banks' (2001) five dimensions of multicultural education, the researcher described the degree to which the school's structure and multicultural curriculum did or did not provide new ways to meet the academic and affective needs of under-represented students by affirming their race, gender, class, and cultural differences. The analysis of these data revealed four emergent themes that include (a) race/class neutral curriculum, (b) positive relationships and colorblind equality, (c) learning styles that influence equity pedagogy, and (d) the need for increased curriculum and staff diversity. The researcher's analysis of these four emergent themes suggests that they are intertwined with three broad, related themes that have been widely discussed in the literature

on school reform: (a) positive teacher-student relationships, (b) hidden curriculum, and (c) assimilation and socialization.

Descriptions from student interviews will contribute to the scholarly literature on multicultural education and its implementation in early and middle college high schools. These descriptions suggest that issues of race, class, gender, and cultural differences among students ought to be further defined in the relevance component of the rigor, relevance, relationships instructional framework that is currently used in these schools. In addition to having pedagogical, policy, leadership, and dropout reform implications, the findings of this study suggest a need for more qualitative studies to assess the efficacy of multicultural curricula in new early and middle college high schools that, since 2001, continue to proliferate across the state of North Carolina.

Dedicated to the memory of Gary, Aunt Delores, and my grandmothers

"Almost always, the creative dedicated minority has made the world better."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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INTRODUCTION

> *Drop-out prevention initiatives should refocus the anti-dropout prevention programs in a more holistic direction . . . Without a deeper understanding of the defensive worldview, it may never be possible to address the vulnerability influences that result in drop-out behavior, and those drop-out prevention initiatives now in place, however well intended, may be doomed to failure.* (Malloy, 1997)

Background/Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to identify and describe former students' perceptions of how a multicultural curriculum impacted their academic achievement. These 10 Black graduates were potential dropouts who graduated from North Carolina's first early/middle college high school, The Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown (EMC-GTCC-J). A growing body of literature addresses the achievement gaps between White students and students of color but few studies exist about the efficacy of relatively new early and middle college high schools in North Carolina in closing achievement gaps and reducing student dropout rates. Sellars (2006) and Bruce (2007) are the only scholars to have studied these schools which first opened in 2001 in Guilford County, North Carolina and have now spread across the state (New Schools Project, 2007). In 2006, the U. S. Department of Education allocated $2.87 million competitive grant (1 of 5 awarded nationally) for a four-year study of Learn and Earn early college high schools. This study will be a collaborative effort between the North Carolina New Schools Project, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the SERVE Center at UNC-Greensboro,

and Duke University, and is supported by the Office of the Governor (SERVE, 2006). Unfortunately, the findings from this study will not be available until 2011.

In 2005, the nation's governors committed themselves and their states to doing something that has never been done in the history of this county; to prepare all students to be ready for college and the demands of a twenty-first century workforce (Hall & Kennedy, 2006). Building on the 2001 *No Child Left Behind Act*, the governors recognized that although gains have been made in closing achievement gaps between White and non-White elementary school students, achievement gaps persist in high schools despite decades of reform initiatives (Education Trust, 2006). A review of national and state high school reform efforts reveal four important notions. First, scholars suggest that there exists a historical tension between Americans' deep beliefs in education and the gradual change of educational practices (Edmunds, 2005; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Second, high school reforms occur slowly, are limited in nature, and are often unsustainable over a period of time. Third, high school reforms are conceived within functionalist beliefs about education that adversely affect non-White students and economically disadvantaged students (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Datnow, 2005; Desimone, 2002). Fourth, scholars suggest that these functionalist school policies and structures cannot be adequately changed unless school reform and dropout prevention measures address cultural differences among students and provide culturally relevant curricula (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

Purpose Statement

This qualitative dissertation identifies and describes recent early/middle college graduates' perceptions of how a multicultural curriculum impacted their student achievement. The perceptions of 10 Black graduates of North Carolina's first Early/Middle

College High School at Guilford Technical Community College-Jamestown campus will contribute a very limited body of research on early/middle college high schools in North Carolina (Bruce, 2007; Sellars, 2006).

This dissertation also discusses the new Learn and Earn early/middle college high school reform model in North Carolina. More specifically, this study focuses on Goal 2 of the Learn and Earn program which requires that early/middle college high school serve a diverse student population that reflects the local school district's demographics in terms of race, gender, socio-economic status, students with disabilities, academic ability, and motivation levels (New Schools Project, 2004a). The dissertation provides some insight regarding the efficacy of this initiative and the impact on national and state reform efforts to increase student achievement and the four year graduation rate for under-represented students. The researcher acknowledges a functionalist assumption implicit in the state's constitution (Shepard & Greene, 2003) that all students can complete a diploma in a traditional or "alternative" high school in North Carolina.[i] Therefore, Chapter 1 discusses the author's research questions and the significance of the study to educational research and to school practice. Chapter 2 discusses literature concerning historical debates about the purpose of public schools, national and state high school reform efforts, success and sustainability factors, and a limited but growing body of scholarly literature about the new North Carolina middle and early college high school reform effort. A salient theme in the literature suggests that school reform initiatives have failed to address and affirm issues related to race, gender, class, and culture (Banks, 2001; Delpit, 1992; Korn & Bursztyn, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Larkin & Sleeter, 1995; Nieto, 1992; Sleeter & Grant, 2006b; Spring, 1994). Based on James Banks' (2001) five dimensions of multicultural education,

Chapter 3 discusses a qualitative research design for identifying and describing student perceptions about the Early/Middle College reform effort relative to the extent that this reform effort addresses and affirms issues related to students' race, gender, class, and culture.

Major Research Question

What do 10 Black graduates of the Early/Middle College High School at Guilford Technical Community College-Jamestown campus (EMC-GTCC-J) believe relative to how a multicultural curriculum impacted their academic achievement?[ii]

Research Questions

These five research questions are derived from Banks' (2001) five dimensions of multicultural education which are (a) content integration, (b) equity pedagogy, (c) knowledge construction, (d) prejudice reduction, and (e) empowering school culture and structure:

1. What do interview responses from former students suggest about the existence of content integration using examples from a variety of cultures?
2. What do interview responses from former students suggest about the existence of an equity pedagogy wherein teachers modify their instruction for diverse students?
3. What do interview responses from former students suggest about the existence of knowledge construction processes wherein teachers help students understand bias within disciplines?
4. What do interview responses from former students suggest about the existence of prejudice reduction wherein teachers address racial attitudes as a part of the curriculum?

5. What do interview responses from former students suggest about the existence of an empowering school structure and social structure for diverse students?

Study Significance

This study is significant for three important reasons. First, it provides insight about whether selected student dropouts and potential dropouts perceive the reasons for achievement gaps and high dropout rates in ways that are consistent or inconsistent with various scholars. The literature identifies the achievement gap between White students and Black and Hispanic students and traces the debate regarding causes (Chubb & Loveless, 2002). They note that the gap was first identified in 1966 and that average Black or Hispanic secondary school students currently achieve at about the same level as the average white student in the lowest quartile of white achievement. Many readers are aware that Black and Hispanic students are much less likely than white students to graduate from high school, acquire a college or advanced degree, or earn a middle-class living. They are also much more likely than whites to suffer from social problems, have inadequate or no health care, and to represent other unfavorable circumstances that often accompany low income (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004).[iii] Despite these realities, authors have documented some schools that have produced evidence that the achievement gap can be narrowed.

The second significance of this study involves providing students with voice to share their views about the alarmingly high dropout rate in North Carolina.[iv] Rather than continuing to tinker with instructional or disciplinary programs, school leaders and policy makers can benefit from hearing student ideas about the causes of student failure. Since the students in this study had either dropped out of school or were close to doing so, they respond to the notion that students fail because of low motivation, poverty, home problems,

popular culture, poor choices, and other individual circumstances. They can also provide insight about whether the alarmingly high dropout rate is symptomatic of traditional school curricula, structures, and functionalist assumptions that all students can succeed in a large, traditional high school or in any reform high school?

The author suggests that the Guilford County school district shares a functionalist orientation with other school districts across the state due to four characteristics that are prominent in the literature (Brosio, 1994; Dantley, 2005; Schaefer, 2004): (a) students are ranked based on performance involving standardized criteria as evidenced by end-of-course testing; (b) students are sorted by ability groups that purport to allow more talented students to rise to the top of school hierarchies as evidenced by college prep, honors, and AP classes; (c) the curriculum instills a core set of values, norms, and beliefs in all students as evidenced by the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and district pacing guide documents for all curricula areas; and (d) the appears to be widespread agreement that schools are fair places where any student can excel according to theories of meritocracy.

However, in 2001, the first early/middle college high schools opened in Guilford County and began a process of moving toward non-functionalist characteristics by (a) eliminating student ranking and identification of a valedictorian and salutatorian in these schools; (b) eliminating tracking and enrolling all students in a default college university prep curriculum that included only honors level courses; (c) providing modest flexibility in requirements to follow the NC Standard Course of Study and district pacing documents; and by (d) acknowledging that some students require smaller class sizes and a greater investment of financial and human resources in order to compete with other students (Grier & Peterson, 2007).

The perceptions of these students who either dropped out or considered doing so is important when one considers that that only 60 out of 100 ninth grade students on average in North Carolina graduate from high school in four years (New Schools Project, 2003). One might confront the assumption in one of two ways. First, one can locate the 40% dropout rate as a problem inherent in many North Carolina students or their environment. Or, one might challenge the assumption that all students can complete their education in public traditional high schools within existing design structures. Since 2001, newly created middle college high schools in Guilford County, North Carolina provide an opportunity to analyze this assumption. These non-traditional high schools provide school structures and new lenses to analyze what school leaders (and teachers) do in redesigned high schools to decrease suspensions and dropouts, to increase graduation rates, and close the achievement gap. These kinds of schools began spreading across the state of North Carolina in 2003 as a result of Governor Mike Easley's formation of The New Schools Project (NSP) in 2003. The NSP forms a partnership among the governor's cabinet, the North Carolina Public Forum, the University of North Carolina, the North Carolina Community College System, SERVE, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (SERVE, 2006).

The third significance of this study is that it provides insight about whether selected student dropouts and potential dropouts perceive early/middle college high schools as an effective strategy for attacking the persistent dropout problem. It is interesting to note that even though the dropout rate and achievement gap have been persistent problems for 40 years, The North Carolina New Schools Project high school reform initiative is the first statewide initiative aimed at redesigning and restructuring high schools in the United States (New Schools Project, 2004). State leaders have acknowledged reports from The National

Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (Ancess & Allen, 2006) at Columbia University that suggest that middle and early college high schools that implement the six design principles of the National Middle College Consortium can close achievement gaps in college performance. Using a sample of 165 students in five middle and early college high schools around the country, researchers found that college grade point averages and the number of college credits earned did not differ based on race, gender, whether the students were born in the United State or abroad, or based on whether the students qualified for free or reduced priced meals. These promising data coupled with the expressed belief within the New Schools Project that the traditional high school is not (and one might argue, never was) designed to serve all students, serve as impetus for the proliferation of middle and early college high schools across North Carolina. Studies are warranted to see if these promising reform initiatives are indeed successful in closing the achievement gap in North Carolina.

Research Design

Data Collection

This research employs qualitative methods for data collection. The researcher obtained permission to record ten student graduate interviews and hire a specialist to transcribe each tape. Of these ten graduates, five students had dropped out of school prior to enrolling at the early/middle college high school and five students were potential dropouts as evidenced by their poor attendance and grades in their traditional high schools (Bruce, 2007). The researcher made notes and jotted down thoughts without narrow, specific regard for the research problem. The researcher took notes about the participants, what they said, their interactions, their conversations, activities, and personal reactions and hunches. These data were recorded chronologically in a Microsoft Word table that has two columns. The first

column included field notes and the second column included codes and questions that the researcher updated each afternoon (while the data was fresh). The purpose here was to look for patterns, frequently used words, and behaviors (Glesne, 2006).

Data Analysis

The researcher chose to use James Banks' (2001) five dimensions of multicultural education framework as a lens to gather and interpret student interview data. Following a group of relationship building questions, students were asked a series of questions that relate to the five dimensions which include content integration, equity pedagogy, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, and an empowering school and social structure. These open-ended questions were followed by follow-up and probing questions that were consistent with Rubin and Rubin's (2005) description of responsive interviewing. After taped interviews were transcribed, the researcher reviewed these written transcripts several times in order to provide triangulation and validity checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These data will help gauge the extent to which students believe that North Carolina's first early/middle college high school affirms issues of race, class, gender, and cultural differences as a component of reducing dropouts and the achievement gap or is a continuation of decades of functionalist school reforms.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that are the same as or closely mirror the limitations that Bruce (2007) listed in her qualitative study of North Carolina's first early/middle college high school. These limitations involve location, sample, and methodology.

1. This study will be limited to 10 Black students who graduated from one school site, The Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown, in 2006.

2. The ten student graduates in this study, who also participated in the Bruce (2007) study, represent a small population that may have a reinforcement bias.
3. This study will not include any students who enrolled in the Middle College and subsequently dropped out of school.
4. This study will not compare the Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown with other early or middle college high schools in Guilford County.
5. This study will not compare the Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown with traditional high schools in Guilford County.
6. This study will not compare the Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown with other early or middle college high schools across the state of North Carolina.
7. This study will not conduct any racial comparisons between student participants and other traditional high schools students in Guilford County.
8. This study relies heavily on self-reported student perceptions of five dimensions of multicultural education.
9. The small study sample of 10 students provides limits to drawing significant generalizations from the findings.
10. The researcher assumes that he is a skilled qualitative researcher and that participants will provide honest interview responses to their former principal.

Definition of Terms

Achievement Gap: refers to the difference in a number several educational measures between the performance of students based primarily on race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. It generally refers to Black and Hispanic students who perform at lower levels than White and selected Asian students.

Conflict Theory Perspective: The conflict theory perspective assumes that social behavior is best understood in terms of conflict or tension between competing groups (not necessarily violent). An example of how this perspective is reflected in schools is the creation of global studies themed or magnet schools that seeks to affirm racial and cultural diversity by teaching a global curriculum.

Dropout: A North Carolina student who is enrolled during the previous school year but is not enrolled on the 20th day of school during the following year and has not graduated.

Early College: A North Carolina high school located on a college campus wherein students enroll in the ninth grade and are expected to complete an associate's degree or two years of transferable college credit in four or five years.

Early/Middle College: A high school located on college campuses in Guilford County, North Carolina that incorporates both concepts from the National Middle College Consortium and early college concepts from the North Carolina New Schools Project (referred to as Learn and Earn program).

Functionalist Perspective (Functionalism): A sociological theory that emphasizes the way that the parts of a society are structured to maintain its stability. It holds that social equilibrium is reached and maintained through socialization of the members of a group via shared norms and values. The norms and values are considered "colorblind" and are passed down through generations. One effect is that students are homogenized and issues of race, class, gender, socio-economic status, and culture are de-emphasized. An example of how this perspective is reflected in schools is state requirements to teach a Eurocentric standardized curriculum, such as the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.

Graduation Rate: The percentage of students who enter the 9th grade and graduate within four years.

Interactionist Perspective: The interactionist perspective generalizes about everyday forms of social interaction in order to understand society as a whole. Schools may construct temporary relations and social processes based on race, class, gender, socio-economic status, and culture. An example of how this perspective is reflected in some schools is the celebration and or study of Black History Month or Women's History Month.

Middle College: A North Carolina high school located on a college campus wherein students who are disengaged, behind in credits, or who do not fit in a traditional high school setting enroll as juniors or seniors with an option of beginning to take college course while in high school.

Multicultural Education: An idea, concept, and reform movement that is concerned with changing schools so that students from all racial, gender, class, and cultural groups have equal opportunities to learn (Banks, 2001). An example of how multicultural education can be reflected in schools is the North Carolina New Schools Project's creation of small early/middle college high schools that are required to serve a diverse student population (that matches local district demographics), to teach a relevant (and rigorous) curriculum, and to ensure that all students graduate on time with up to two years of college credit.

North Carolina New Schools Project: This statewide initiative, supported by Governor's Education Cabinet and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, supports the creation of small, autonomous, innovative high schools (including Learn and Earn early college high schools and redesigns of large, traditional high school).

Underrepresented groups: Defined as Black students, Hispanic students, and students of any race who qualify for free or reduced priced meals (breakfast and/or lunch) under the federal child nutrition program.

Summary

This chapter discussed the need for and significance of a qualitative study of student perceptions about the impact of a multicultural curriculum on their student achievement in North Carolina's first early/middle college high school. By focusing on goal number 2 of the North Carolina New Schools Project which requires a rigorous and relevant curriculum to serve a diverse student body, the author outlined a plan to discuss the efficacy of these schools in increasing student achievement and reducing dropout rates for Black students. This chapter also introduced how student interview responses were collected and analyzed in order to contribute to a very limited body of research on the overall early/middle college high school concept in North Carolina.

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[i] Article IX, Section 2 of the state constitution states "The General Assembly shall provide by taxation and otherwise for a general and uniform system of free public schools, which shall be maintained at least nine months in every year, and wherein equal opportunities shall be provided for all students."

[ii] All ten participants were also participants in a resiliency and self-efficacy study conducted by Bruce (2007) during their senior year in high school, 2005-2006. Although there were 12 students in the Bruce study, the researcher was only able to make contact with 10 of the original 12 participants.

[iii] For example, in Guilford County Schools (North Carolina's third largest school district) 80% of African American students quality for free-reduced lunch compared to 20 percent of white students.

[iv] The author hopes that student interviews will provide some insights relative to how functionalist or non-functionalist theses schools are based on the five dimensions of multicultural education theoretical framework (to be discussed in Chapter 5).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

> *Leadership for social justice interrogates the policies and procedures that shape schools and at the same time perpetuate social inequalities and marginalization due to race, class, gender, and other markets of otherness*. (Dantley & Tillman, 2005)

Introduction

The state of North Carolina opened the nation's first state university in 1789 and it guaranteed all of its citizens a "free and appropriate public education." It is an interesting paradox that in the year 2007 the state has a high school graduation rate of only 68% (New Schools Project, 2007). The purpose of this qualitative research study was to identify and describe former students' perceptions of how a multicultural curriculum impacted their academic achievement. These 10 Black graduates formerly were drop-outs or potential dropouts who enrolled in and graduated from North Carolina's first early/middle college high school, The Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown (EMC-GTCC-J). Based on the North Carolina New Schools Project's (2004) second requirement of providing a rigorous and relevant curriculum to serve a diverse population of up to 400 students in terms of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, academic ability, achievement, and motivation (New Schools Project, 2007), the researcher assumed that since the 10 students graduated from high school, the multicultural curriculum both existed and served a beneficial purpose. The researcher utilized Banks' (2001) five dimensions of multicultural education to investigate

student perceptions about the curriculum and the extent to which this assumption is correct or incorrect.

Their perceptions of how the school's structure and curriculum addressed multicultural education and how this impacted their student achievement provides researchers, policymakers, and educators with insight into how issues of race, class, gender, and cultural differences among students might be addressed in redesigned high schools and how this might impact dropout prevention efforts. The review of literature in this chapter illuminates an evolving debate among scholars about high school reform at the national, state, and local levels.

The first section of this chapter discusses historical debates among educators, policy makers, and elites about the purpose of public schools. This literature provides some context to examine why student achievement and dropout rates differ considerably based on students' race, class, and gender. In order to understand these disparities within a historical context, the second section of this chapter will present literature from various scholars about the causes of minority achievement gaps as well as their views about achievement gap strategies and solutions. The third section of this chapter will discuss a growing body of scholarly literature that recommends multicultural education is a viable, yet underutilized school reform strategy to close achievement gaps and to reduce dropout rates. The fourth section of this chapter will discuss national, state, and local dropout reform literature as a backdrop for introducing a qualitative study of student perceptions of the impact of a multicultural curriculum on their student achievement in North Carolina's first early/middle college high school (Chapter 3).

Historical Debates

Since the founding of the United States, there have been conflicting debates about the purpose of public education (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Educators, policymakers, and scholars disagree about the role schools play in perpetuating dropout rates, the impact of various dropout reform initiatives, and the efficacy of multicultural curricula as a dropout reform strategy (Darling-Hammond, 2002; Delpit, 1992; Jerald, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Malloy, 1997). In order to contextualize current efforts to implement relevant, multicultural curricula and to reform school practices; one must understand the historical development of various dominant perspectives on the purpose of schools.

Historical Debates Regarding the Purpose of Public School

Political debates raged as early as colonial times about how to educate future leaders and how to socialize citizens within the American political system. Since heredity and monarchies were not transplanted from England to the American colonies, George Washington once suggested that the country develop a national university to serve as a training ground for future leaders from all thirteen colonies. His critics alleged that this would lead to elitism and favor to upper social classes. They advocated a concept often referred to today as meritocracy. Meritocracy is a social system that purports to give all members of a social system equal chance of changing their status in a social hierarchy (Douthat, 2005). Thomas Jefferson extended this concept by advocating for three years of free schooling for all non slave children. Those who performed the best and demonstrated the most talent would then receive grammar school education at public expense. Jefferson envisioned schools that did not teach people how to be good citizens, but rather that identified the best and brightest leaders (Spring, 1994).

Horace Mann, however, viewed the purpose of public schools in the 19th century to create public norms and a common creed. Widely considered to be the father of American education, Mann thought that all children should attend the same kind of school. As children were socialized together in "common schools," religious and class distinctions would gradually diminish. By the 1890's, partly the result of a new wave of immigration from southern and eastern Europe, public schools throughout the country focused heavily on teaching patriotism, institutional loyalty, and "Americanization." Reciting of the pledge of allegiance and singing patriotic songs would remain a part of many schools until recent years.

Spring (1994) provides a historical overview of conflicts that arose in the early twentieth century, vis á vis the purpose of public schooling in the United States. At the outset of the twentieth century, John Dewey advocated progressive education. Of paramount importance to Dewey was the developmental readiness of individual children and a curriculum that was relevant to each child (Tanner, 1997). Durhkeim, and other functionalists like Frederick Taylor and Alford Binet, who were influenced by Charles Darwin and William James, focused on how to maintain equilibrium in the existing social order.

Spring describes public versus private goals of education as well as political, social, and economic purposes of education. While government financed educational systems were set up to serve public, not private goals, the greatest areas of conflict in the early twentieth century centered around the political goal of molding citizens by teaching patriotism, social goals to reform society, and economic goals of sorting and selecting students in classrooms for the labor market. Each of these areas impacted school curricula at the school building levels.

Another area for debate about the purpose of schools in the twentieth century involved social issues. As schools became a symbol of optimism and hope, changes were made to the curriculum to advance improvements in social conditions, something that was often more important than increasing learning. For example, officials focused on improving student attendance, not just for learning sake, but in order to reduce juvenile delinquency. Summer schools targeted keeping kids off the street, driver education was introduced to decrease traffic accidents, and home economics classes were introduced to promote families and health education (Spring, 1994).

Throughout the twentieth century, economic arguments for public schooling were more salient than either political or social arguments. Goodlad (1984) found in his research that the dominant goals in public education in the twentieth century were economic. It is interesting to note that in his study all elementary, middle, and high school teachers ranked vocational goals as least important and ranked intellectual, personal, and social goals as most important. Banks (1999b) discusses how schools focused on socializing future workers, sorting students for the work force, and how pressures were placed on guidance counselors to provide more vocational guidance. Despite this overreaching focus on economic goals, Douthat (2005) questions whether meritocracy works. He found that less than 6% of Americans obtain college degrees by age 24. In addition, only 6 percent of the students in our nation's flagship colleges and universities are first generation college students and only 11 percent of the graduates come from families in the country's bottom economic quartile.

Over time, the curriculum in schools served political, social, and most especially economic purposes. Schools became factories producing high numbers of dropouts with little attention paid to needs and culture of individual students. Kowalski and Brunner (2005)

suggest that as the United States became an industrial power from 1900 to 1930, public school officials and school board members increasingly adopted the "philosophical underpinning of the industrial revolution" (p. 146). Many thought that both factories and schools needed scientific managers who focused on improving efficiency. Superintendents developed as managers whose primary responsibilities included budget development, standardizing operations, and personnel and facility management.

Over time, even the design of schools began to follow a factory model (Lackney, 2005). School facilities have reflected the behavior and attitudes of those who create them as well as those who learn and work inside of them. As the common school movement grew between 1850 and 1900, "multiple one-room urban schools were replaced with repetitive and uniform double-loaded corridor of identical size self-contained classrooms leading to a centralized administrative area" (p. 508). Students were sorted and segregated by age and grade level. Standardized building designs were coupled with standardized curricula.

By the turn of the century, common schools gave rise to the comprehensive high school and junior high schools. After the birth rate increased following World War II, there was an unprecedented need for school construction. Grand school building plans were replaced with standardized plans that were not optimized for learning. Although school design in the 1970s and 80s experimented with open education, it would not be until opening of the 21st century that schools began to experiment with small learning communities.

At the beginning of the 21st century, high schools across the country continued to experience both federal and state pressures to improve schools (Brown & Hunter, 2006). Noting that previous high school reforms were inadequate, the National Association for Secondary Principals (2004) issued a seminal study entitled *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for*

Leading High School Reform. This landmark publication cites widespread concern about the minority achievement gap and persistently high dropout rates. In addition, it calls upon states and local school districts to enact new, more effective reforms necessary to increase student achievement for all students and to significantly reduce dropout rates. The next section of this chapter discusses scholarly literature about the general student achievement trends, causes of the minority achievement gap, and strategies for closing the minority achievement gap.

Student Achievement Gap

The average Black or Hispanic secondary school student currently achieves at about the same level as the average White student in the lowest quartile of White achievement (Chubb & Loveless, 2002; Education Trust, 2006). Many readers are aware that Black and Hispanic students are much less likely than White students to graduate from high school, acquire a college or advanced degree, or earn a middle-class living. They are also much more likely than Whites to suffer from social problems, have inadequate or no health care, and to represent other unfavorable circumstances that often accompany low income.[i] The literature on student achievement gaps (including disproportionate dropout rates and graduation gaps) between White students and students of color is extensive (Anderson, 2004; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Payne, 2001; Williams; 2004). Since the gap was first identified in 1966, scholars have analyzed student achievement data and developed different interpretations of the data. The next sections of this chapter discuss different views about student achievement gap trends, causes of student achievement gaps, and solutions for student achievement gaps.

Student Achievement Gap Trends

Several scholars have suggested that, in order to understand why closing student achievement gaps and reducing dropouts have proven so difficult over the past three decades, one must first understand student achievement trends in general during the twentieth century (Grissmer, Flanagan, & Williamson, 1998; Kaufman, Kwon, Klein, & Chapman, 2000; Lee, 2002; Lubienski, 2002; Singham, 2003). Following the publication of the Coleman report in the 1960's, scholarship about student achievement among different ethnic groups increased (Coleman et al., 1966). Many empirical studies were published that highlighted differences in student achievement among White and non-White students. These studies as well as data from the National Center on Educational Statistics point out that the achievement gaps between White and Black students and between White and Hispanic students narrowed significantly during the 1970s and 1980's (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Ogbu, 1994; Peng & Hill, 1995).

Lee (2002) shows how the gap between White and Black NAEP reading and math scores fell by 20% to 40% or by 0.2 or 0.5 in standard deviation units. During the period from 1970 to the late 1980's when states focused on minimum competencies, White students' achievement level was fairly flat while Black students made significant gains. After 1986-1988 however, when higher standards for learning proliferated across states, the pattern generally began to reverse and the achievement gap became wider. White students improved on NAEP scores in the 1990's while Black students made only small gains (Lubienski, 2002).

Although Lee (2002) suggests that the gap between White and Black students narrowed in the 1970s and 1980s due to changes in school curricula and instruction, he

cautions against oversimplifying that low performing minority students benefited from a state driven focus on acquisition of basic skills while White students simultaneously benefited from a focus on higher order thinking skills. He is critical of previous research studies that "tended to assume implicitly that the effects of certain factors on student achievement are constant across time periods and racial and ethnic groups" and suggests the necessity of "investigating simultaneous changes across a broad range of factors from multiple data sources and to examine their interactive, joint influences on the achievement gap" (p. 10). He notes that the factors that were attributed to narrowing achievement gaps from the 1970s to the late 1980s do not readily explain why gaps have widened since then.

While some scholars make a strong case that achievement gaps widened nationally after the late 1980s, the Council of Great City Schools (Casserly, 2006) recently reported that many urban school districts are making gains reducing achievement gaps in reading, and to a lesser degree, in math scores on both state assessments and NAEP assessments. Founded in 1956, the Council enrolls nearly a third of all students of color in the United States. Although these students are twice as likely to be poor or to have limited English language skills than students who are enrolled in the average school district nationwide, the Council asserts that math gains are evident at the fourth and eighth grade levels and reading is improving at the fourth grade level but not the eighth grade. The Council also suggests that academic achievement gains in its 66 city school systems (from 38 states and the District of Columbia) are the result of working harder and smarter coupled with high standards, strong and stable leadership, better teaching, more instructional time, regular assessments, stronger accountability, and efficient management. The Council also notes the difficulty of

conclusively stating that urban schools are improving academically and are closing achievement gaps:

> The findings of Beating the Odds VI are preliminary and leaved with caution, as they were when we first published these data five years ago. The nation does not have an assessment system that allows our questions to be answered with certainty, although the Council of Great City Schools is trying to solve this though Trial Urban District Assessment of NAEP. (p. iii)

Although scholars and the Council of Great City Schools offer different interpretations of student achievement trends since the late 1980s, a salient theme in their research studies is that conventional thinking about the causes of and solutions to the achievement gap must be re-examined. The next section of this chapter discusses this literature.

Minority Achievement Gap Causes

In 1996, James Coleman, a social relations professor at John Hopkins University joined with Ernest Campbell, a Vanderbilt University professor to publish the landmark Coleman Report (1966). Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 commissioned a survey about the lack of availability of equal educational opportunity because of race, religion, national origin or any other reason in pubic educational institutions. Coleman studied 600,000 children at 4,000 schools and reported to Congress that, although most children attended schools where they were segregated and where schooling between White and minority schools were similar, teachers' training and minority student achievement lagged a few years behind Whites. In addition, the gap widened by the time students entered high school. Racial segregation was believed to be a root cause of the achievement gap so the federal government introduced a policy of affirmative action to racially integrate schools and to preventing Black enrollments from exceeding 60% in any school.

Since the publication of the Coleman Report in 1966, a plethora of research points to a complex array of achievement gap causes that are not limited to segregated schools. These causes include school factors such as teacher quality, tracking, language, school structures, school funding, segregated schools, and biased assessments as well as non school factors that include race, socio-economic status, and student culture (English, 2002; Lee, 2002; Quintero & Cooks, 2002; Singham, 2003; Thomasson, 2000). Lubienski (2002) found that family conditions, socioeconomic status, youth culture, and student behavior are not sufficient causes of minority achievement gaps.

New research studies burgeoned after Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 to holds state education departments accountable for all students performing on grade level in reading and math by the year 2014 (Brown & Hunter, 2006; Lynch, 2006). Many of these recent studies are different from previous studies because they place the causes for the achievement gap directly in schools. Suggested school causes include low teacher expectations, poor teacher quality for the most fragile students, unrealistic time tables for learning goals, irrelevant curricula, poor teaching methods that encourage passive, rote rather than active, higher order thinking and learning, assessment tools that are not authentic, ineffective administrators, and school beliefs and structures that embolden rather than close achievement gaps (English, 2002; Marzano, 2007; Stiggins, 2004, 2007).

Peske and Haycock (2006) argue that teacher quality for poor and or/minority students is the most significant cause of minority achievement gaps. In a recent Education Trust report, they suggest three points that support this notion. First, despite plentiful evidence that new teachers are not as effective as more experienced teachers, students in high minority schools are twice as likely to be assigned to new or out of field teachers. In high

poverty middle schools, about 70% of math classes are taught by teachers who do not have a college major or minor in math. Second, they cite research from the University of Tennessee Value Added Research and Assessment Center that found that, on average, low achieving students gained approximately 14 points each year on Tennessee state tests when taught by less effective teachers, and over 53 points when taught by most effective teachers. Third, in 2006, the U. S. Secretary of Education required state departments of education for the first time to submit plans ensuring that low-income and minority students in their states are not taught disproportionately by lateral entry or uncertified teachers.

Other authors look at geographic and racial patterns including the unique struggle of urban schools (Williams, 2004). They discuss a range of causal factors such as historical and present social dynamics, cultural differences, pedagogy, learning variables, physical and social environments, and the need to change our perception of at-risk students to students with resiliency. They argue that school reform strategies must address a comprehensive range of issues that affect urban students.

Some scholars study the mechanics of race in integrated high schools (Noguera & Wing, 2006). They expose how hidden inequities of schools–cultural attitudes, tracking, curricular access, and after-school activities sort students and produce failure. In addition, there is also a growing body of differentiated instruction literature addressing the role of classroom teachers and school administrators in developing equitable and excellent schools where all students persist and complete their diploma requirements (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000; Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

Other authors look at geographic and racial patterns including the unique struggle of urban schools (Williams, 2004). They discuss a range of causal factors such as historical and

present social dynamics, cultural differences, pedagogy, learning variables, physical and social environments, and the need to change our perception of at-risk students to students with resiliency. They argue that school reform strategies must address a comprehensive range of issues that affect urban students.

Some scholars suggest that all of the reported causes of the achievement gap are linked largely to the mechanics of race, class, and cultural differences in integrated high schools (Noguera & Wing, 2006). They expose how hidden inequities of schools–cultural attitudes, tracking, curricular access, and after-school activities sort students and produce failure. In addition, there is also a growing body of literature addressing the role of classroom teachers and school administrators in developing equitable and excellent schools where all students persist and complete their diploma requirements (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000).

Many of these scholars argue that acceptance of a dominant set of values and existing cultural ways promote high school dropouts, low attendance, and low grades (Eubanks, Parish, & Smith, 1997). Nationally, 30% of ninth grade students do not graduate from high school in four years (Jerald, 2006). In North Carolina, 20,000 students, one out of every 20, dropped out of high school in 2004-2005 (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2006). The state's ABC's Accountability Program, in existence since 1994, requires school building level officials to confer with students who drop out of school and to report the names and numbers of students who drop out prior to the twentieth day of each school year (excluding students who fail to return after long term suspension or who are incarcerated).

Some scholars suggest that the practice of accepting a dominant set of values in schools is deeply rooted in history and continues today via what is termed the hidden curriculum. Giroux (2001) argues that the focus on creating standardized curricula involves

indoctrinating students with unwritten values and norms that serves the purpose of maintaining racial and class hierarchies. Apple (2004) notes:

> The ahistorical nature of the field of curriculum is rather interesting here. Anyone familiar with the intense argumentation both within and on the fringes of Progressive Education Association during its history soon realizes that one of its major points of contention among progressive educators was the problem of indoctrination. Should schools, guided by a vision of a more just society, teach a particular set of social meaning to their students? Should they concern themselves only with progressive pedagogical techniques, rather than espouse a particular social and economic cause? Questions of this type plagued democratically minded educators in the past and controversy continues, though in a different vocabulary, to this day. (p. 27)

A review of literature about the student achievement gap reveals that the problem has continued despite four decades of school reform. Scholars have suggested varied solutions for this problem which are outlined in the next section of this chapter.

Minority Achievement Gap Solutions

A common theme in the existing literature about closing the minority achievement gap is that educators need to examine why reforms have either failed or have been unsustainable after the late 1980s. Although practitioners and scholars advocate reform, few studies have actually examined the sustainability of reforms over long periods of time, in part because reforms tend not to last (Datnow, 2005). In view of this fact, one might reconsider the commonly held assumption in the United States that all students have the potential to graduate from the traditional, comprehensive American high schools. Several points seem to undergird this assumption. First, most states require students to attend school until age 16. Second, high schools are provided to all students free of charge. And third, until recently, there were few if any non-traditional high schools, except perhaps alternative schools, for students who present discipline problems. In recent years, in part due to federal legislation,

schools have begun to take a closer look at how many students are completing high schools and how many drop out before completion (New Schools Project, 2004b).

A common strand in much of the existing literature about the achievement gap is that, after reviewing why previous reforms failed or were unsustainable, schools need to enact a prescribed set of school reform initiatives that impact teacher quality, curricula, testing policies, leadership, and more equitable distribution of resources. In a recent Education Trust report, Peske and Haycock (2006) suggest that the most critical school reform strategy is for states and local school districts to address gaps in teacher quality. They argue that the achievement gap cannot be closed until poor, minority, and low achieving students have access to high quality teachers at levels commensurate with middle class and wealthy students. They propose eight short term recommendations to improve teacher quality and to close the minority achievement gap:

- Change district hiring practices to staff poor schools first, similar to how struggling sports team benefit from a draft strategy.
- Pay effective teachers more to teach in high needs schools.
- Balance the challenge for teaching in high needs schools by giving teachers smaller class loads.
- Provide teachers with paid sabbaticals to discourage burnout.
- Reform tenure so that ineffective teachers leave the profession.
- Place the best principals in schools that need them the most
- Ban unfair budget practices that discriminate against high poverty schools
- Improve supply of teachers in critical areas such as math, science, special education, and bilingual education

They also propose four long term recommendations to improve teacher quality and to close the minority achievement gap:

- Build better data systems to identify the most effective teachers
- Evaluate teacher prep programs (they cite Louisiana as the only state that holds colleges and universities accountable for the quality of teachers they prepare)
- Eliminate state level funding gaps
- Rethink teacher compensation to reward teacher effectiveness versus experience and educational levels.

Another strand of literature argues that changes in student assessments can have a significant role in closing achievement gaps. Stiggins (2007) notes that a primary role of student assessments has been to rank students and to sort them into winners and losers. As the mission of schools changed to help all students meet certain standards, assessments for learning are required to enhance learning rather than to merely monitor it. This requires sharing achievement targets with students, presenting expectations with in student friendly language along with examples of exemplary student work. It also requires using two decades of research to blend standardized assessments with classroom assessments in such a way that builds student confidence and motivation (Stiggins, 2004).

Although Stiggins suggests utilizing assessments differently as a strategy for closing minority achievement gaps, other scholars such as English (2002) dispute the validity of many standardized tests. He argues that IQ and other standardized tests are artifacts of historically flawed systems of measuring student achievement. He writes:

> From this perspective, as achievement tests continue to show consistent fault lines by race and class, it should be clear that there can be no substantial closing of the achievement gap between minority and majority children in urban school systems because the gap itself is part of the foundation of the measurement process. (pp. 306-307)

English also argues standardized tests are based on false science and protect the dominance of White middle class structures.

Another theme in the literature on the minority achievement gap involves rethinking a curriculum that reinforces dominant White middle class structures referenced by English. A growing number of scholars suggest that multicultural education is an effective, yet underutilized strategy to strike at the heart of the longstanding minority achievement gap and disproportionate dropout rates. The next section of this chapter discusses multicultural

education as a reform strategy to close achievement gaps and to reduce disproportionate dropout rates.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education, according to Banks (2001), is an idea, concept and reform movement that is concerned with changing schools so that students from all racial, class, and cultural groups have equal opportunities to learn. As student populations become more ethnically and economically diverse, schools are forced to reconsider how to effectively teach these students as well as existing notions about curriculum relevance. Thus, the following section of this chapter focuses on four areas. First, it discusses how multicultural education has evolved as a student achievement strategy. Second, it discusses how new multicultural policy windows have opened as a result of shifting student demographics. Third, it discusses literature on strategic multicultural education policy and planning. Fourth, it discusses assumptive world rules that might help sustain this reform strategy.

Multicultural Education as a Student Achievement Strategy

To combat the historical problem of schools as large, impersonal factories of academic failure for many disadvantaged students, scholars have argued for 30 years the importance of multicultural curricula as a strategy to reform many of the nation's schools (Banks, 2001; Bennett, 1990; Delpit, 1992; Garcia, 1982; Nieto, 1999; Sleeter, 2005). Scholars argue that there must be curricular emphasis placed on the students as individuals to equip them to fully participate in a culturally diverse community (Asante, 1992; Gay, 1998; Grant & Sleeter, 1993; Hilliard, 1992). They challenge traditional, functionalist thinking that school functions can or should be value-free. Moreover, they argue that individual students

and their backgrounds are relevant to the creation and delivery of the curriculum (Darling-Hammond, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Multicultural education scholars present varying definitions of multicultural education but agree to some core principles. Banks (1993a, 1993b), and Gay (1991) reviewed many multicultural education studies that proliferated in the 1970's. Six common themes were gleaned from these studies:

- Student attitudes about race, ethnicity, and gender can be positively influenced by curriculum interventions.
- These interventions are influenced by teacher, school, environmental, and community influences.
- Cooperative learning positively impacts student achievement and self esteem for students of color, particularly Black and Hispanic students. There was no different effect on White students.
- Cooperative group learning was most effective when the focus was on learners having common goals and equal status relationships while getting to know each other.
- Teaching approaches that positively reinforce Black cultures reduces young Black children's preferences for Whites.
- Multicultural education can help students develop more positive racial attitudes and perceptions.

Sleeter and Grant (2006b) reviewed the published literature on multicultural education through the 1980's and found four common approaches among scholars. They include (a) teaching culturally different students to fit into mainstream American society, (b) a human relations approach focused on diverse groups living in harmony, (c) single group studies that focus on awareness and respect for individual groups, and (d) focusing in prejudice reduction, economic equity, and social justice for all groups.

By the 1990's, several scholars began to discuss multicultural education in the context of comprehensive school reform. They found that students learned more when the curriculum related to their prior knowledge and life experiences (Boggs, Watson-Gegeo, & McMillen, 1985; Cazden, John, & Hymes, 1985; Gay, 1998). Nieto (1992) argues that

multicultural education should challenge all forms of discrimination in school structures and procedures as well as in classroom instruction, curricula, and relationships. Hilliard (1991/1992) and Asante (1991/1992) discuss the purposes of Afrocentric curricula in providing feelings of acknowledgement and self-worth for students in several urban school districts in the 1980's and 1990's. Other scholars argued that students of color require acknowledgement and connection with their race, class, and cultural characteristics. Delpit (1992) writes that teachers must see their students' color as a prerequisite for effectively teaching them.

Two recent dissertation studies provide support for this notion. First, In her dissertation study of resiliency-building for 12 African-American male students in grades 3-8, Allen (2005) argues that most research on these students does not show race-comparative studies wherein their group is compared to White students as a group. In addition to early identification of causes for the achievement gaps of African-American male students, Allen suggests that these students' cultural norms must be affirmed in order for a true teacher-student bonding process to take place. She states that this bonding process must occur first in order to reverse negative academic trends and to accelerating learning for African-American students.

Similar to Allen's study, Trice (2005) conducted a study of ten high achieving African-American male students in grades 3 through 8 and offers some complimentary results. His study focused on the limitations in academic attainment for these students and their high school science experiences. His findings compliment Allen's discussion about the importance of the teacher-student relationship in increasing achievement for African-American students. He argues that teachers must focus on these students' learning styles and

understand how the role that cultural influences play. He found that African-American male students in his study did not have deep conversations with their science teachers as did White students. Moreover, White teacher conversations with African-American students tended to be limited to whether or not they understood concepts. Teachers did not address the students' thoughts and feelings about racial identity or engage in deep conversations about their experiences outside or class or outside of school.

Despite these studies that affirm the necessity of addressing the role of diverse student cultures in classrooms, and despite multicultural scholarly research and recommendations for school reforms in the 1980s and 1990s, schools continue to maintain the status quo by focusing on equilibrium in educational systems, scientific management, and efficiency. In fact, the standards movement grew in the 1990s and gained steam after the passage of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation in 2002. Scholars note that efficiency is most often measured by standardized test scores, an area where poor and non-white students perform at lower levels than white students. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the achievement gap and high dropout rate in the nation and in the state of North Carolina suggests that serious problems are evident in functionalist educational systems. As English (2002) notes, functionalists have been agents of reproducing an unjust social order through a hidden curriculum and discriminatory testing:

> So what we are observing is a clash of two powerful metanarratives in American education today. One is represented by the view that tests are neutral and meritocratic tools blind of cultural differences and that when employed to measure school success, they can do so objectively and efficiently. The explanation offered as to why demographic and socioeconomic variables skew test results is either left unanswered or appears in muted forms of outmoded and discredited assumptions regarding human intelligence as fixed, singular, and linear. The competing metanarrative, which is gaining ground, is that intelligence is a largely cultural construct, peculiar to class and to the existing socioeconomic structure. It is neither stable, unitary, nor linear. It is permeated with all the cultural artifacts that abound within the class structure,

> including linguistic patterns, manners, dress, and attitudes toward formal schooling. We have consistently confused the lack of some forms of cultural capital with the lack of ability and intelligence on the part of culturally different students. (p. 306)

Indeed, a growing body of multicultural research forces one to reconsider functionalist notions about public education that fall short of explaining the longstanding problem of underachieving students. The research provides a context to reconsider the functionalist assumption that all students can complete a diploma in a traditional or redesigned high school in North Carolina.[ii]

New Multicultural Education Policy Window

Based on the proliferation of students of color in the nation's public schools coupled with pressures to reduce dropouts, scholars and some policymakers recognize the existence of a new policy window for multi-cultural education (Education Commission, 2007; Kingdon, 2003). In the 1960s, many minorities and women associated with the Civil Rights and Feminist Movements pushed for multi-cultural education. One must understand how the political issues involved a clash of values. As David Easton noted in 1965, "politics is the authoritative allocation of values." The multiculturalists' focus was on various groups' contributions to society being included in textbooks. They advocated Karl Marx's view of politics as a means by which the ruling class or elite disenfranchise lower classes, in this case by controlling the curriculum. These "subaltern counter publics" accused their opponents of maintaining the status quo (Marshall lecture, 1998). Whereas the dominant value from 1910 to 1950 was efficiency, in the 1970's these groups pushed the dominant value of equity. By the 1980's, there was a backlash as the dominant value of quality and standards replaced equity.

This information is critical to understand when one analyzes how Kingdon's policy window opened again in the late 80s and early 90s when three streams converged. First, the problem became recognized again as opponents focused on basic reading, writing, and math skills. Second, policy proposals became more refined as more parent groups called for censorship of some minority literature such as The Color Purple by Alice Walker. Third, there was a change in politics stream after the 1980 and 1984 elections. The Reagan/Bush Department of Education published several reports including "A Nation at Risk" which caused many state policy makers to believe that students were learning a lot of unnecessary material. As a result, profound changes were made in federal educational policy (Clark & Astuto, 1986). The primary focus became competition and excellence while equity was deemphasized. The second Bush administration accelerated this trend after 2002 with the passage of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation (Brown & Hunter, 2006).

An analysis of this policy window (Kingdon) suggests that although the issue of multi-cultural education has resurfaced due to concerns relative to immigration, affirmative action, and the disproportionate number of students of color who drop out of high school in North Carolina, one might further analyze the political climate to understand how and why the window opened. For example, when developing a state or federal policy, one must understand that the motivations of the Reagan/Bush Department of Education were quite different from the 1980s. The issue in the 1980s and 90s increasingly reveal opposition to the "politics at the margin." As women and minorities continue to push for inclusion in textbooks, curriculum, and administrative positions, opponents refer to the disenfranchised as disorderly minorities who inappropriately continue to push for inclusion in textbook and curriculum. Their voices have been so loud that even the AFT president, Albert Shanker

(1994), addressed the issue. He questioned whether these groups at the margin were eroding too much traditional American literature and culture by focusing on gender and ethnicity:

> For years, books assigned in junior high and high school literature classes were pretty standard. Most kids read A Tale of Two Cities and MacBeth . . . and few asked how these books got their status as "classics" or why they kept it. All this has changed. The literature curriculum is undergoing some serious scrutiny. But what do we mean by representative? If we are dropping Silas Marner, how do we decide what takes its place? (p. 17)

Like Shanker, some scholars argue that multicultural education advocates groups at the margins have taken multiculturalism too far (Ravitch, 1991; Stotsky, 1999). They accuse multicultural scholars of lacking intellectual rigor, of fragmenting American society into separate groups along racial and cultural lines, of decreasing academic rigor in schools, and of diving existing curricula into unmanageable pieces (Ravitch, 1991/1992; Ryan, 1993; Schlesinger, 1991; Schmidt, 1997; Stotsky, 1992). Advocating the maintenance of a melting pot theory, Schlesinger (1992) writes:

> the genius of America lies in its capacity to forge a single nation from peoples of remarkably diverse racial, religious, and ethnic origins. It has done so because democratic principles provide both the philosophical bonds of union and practical experience in civic participation. The American creed envisages a nation composed of individuals making their own choices and accountable to themselves, not a nation based on inviolable ethnic communities. (p. 134)

The next section of this chapter discusses strategies advocated by scholars to reframe multicultural education policy for a broad audience or to people who might otherwise oppose it.

Strategic Multicultural Education Policy and Planning

Policy scholars present four other strategies that will help secure support for multicultural curricula in the state legislature (Weimar & Vining, 1999). First, co-aptation involves getting state legislators to believe that one's proposal is at least partly their idea. One

must find a way to get educational elites to claim some ownership of the multi-cultural education policy. Second, compromises are essential. Third, herethestics suggest that policy initiators can gain advantage through manipulating the circumstances. Many educators might shy away from the term manipulation since the historical view is that schools should be isolated from politics. As schools become more politicized issues, though, this is no longer a reality. Fourth, policy initiators must master the art of political rhetoric which is the most common political strategy. Persuasion must be used to convince legislators that if they mandate serious multi-cultural education, they will become national heroes because test scores will increase exponentially as more groups of students become interested in their studies.

Long before the multi-cultural policy proposal becomes law, advocates must analyze its implementation at the state and local levels. Too often, advocates focus on national policy actors and ignore the state, local, and micro levels. Local translation of policy is important because locals lay meaning on a policy (Sleeter, 2000). This issue can be viewed in the context of three groups: administrators, teachers, and students. Administrators in schools and Departments of Education are likely to adhere to and enforce a comprehensive multi-cultural education policy passed by the state legislatures even if they do not fundamentally agree with it. Assumptive worlds function to constrain and limit conflicts within manageable arenas and issues. Simply put, administrators' perceptions of the expected behaviors, rituals, and feasible policy options guide their behavior and instruct them not to display divergent values (Marshall & Mitchell, 1991).

Teachers, on the other hand, may remake the multi-cultural education policy at the local level or possibly undermine it. Their political actions are determined by the

characteristics of their principals' working styles, which forms the primary context of the micro-political arena (Blase, 1991). They can resist reform by reinterpreting its goals and acquiring more power or control in their workplaces. Reform provides them an opportunity to use micropolitics to increase their power and define their profession (Noblit, Berry, & Dempsey, 1991). Some teachers may support the status quo by refusing to expand their course curricula to include more women and minorities. Others might simply be employing a coping mechanism in order to manage the many demands of their jobs. Such "street level bureaucrats" do not necessarily have impure motives (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). Both examples demonstrate that although teachers are neither part of the Insider or Near Circle elite of policy makers, they represent political actors who increasingly impact policy at the local level. Therefore, advocates must mobilize support for multi cultural education among teachers in order for policies passed by the General Assembly to be followed to the letter in schools. Datnow (2000) found that it is essential to genuinely increase the level of teacher involvement in any reform adoption. Steffey, Wolfe, Pasch, and Enz (2000) found that teachers who are encouraged to follow a reflection and renewal-growth cycle model are more likely to construct meaning and knowledge for themselves and to continue to grow professionally throughout their careers.

Students have been ignored as policy actors but also have some impact on policy implementation at the local level. As one scholar noted, “traditional approaches to politics of schooling have failed to examine students' struggles to construct an identity within the cultural politics of school life” (Anderson & Herr, 1993, p. 41). If this is so, advocates for multi-cultural education policies would want to ensure that class, race, and gender issues figure prominently in the curriculum since they are key elements in how adolescents

construct identity. Though more attention needs to be paid to policy-maker elites and teachers who implement multi-cultural education, some attention must be given to how students receive this instruction and its impact on them.

Assumptive World Rules

Some multicultural scholars note that the importance of reformers adhering to prescribed processes and ensuring that weak multicultural curriculum polices are not rushed through state legislatures or state departments of education (Schlesinger, 1991; Stotsky, 1999). In addition to these individuals knowing their place in the state political hierarchy, they must cooperate with those in power (Marshall, Mitchell, & Wirt, 1989). These advocates must use a wide range of policy mobilization tactics which include providing "something for everybody" and cover all their bases. Their policy debates cannot diverge from the dominant value of excellence and accountability, lead to open defiance, or undermine powerful interests. Considering the Arizona Bilingual Act of 1984, they must also ensure that a less comprehensive or mandatory bill which lacks any mandatory enforcement provisions does not quickly and quietly pass in the General Assembly (Sacken & Medina, 1990).

In order to ensure that multicultural education research becomes comprehensive multicultural education policies or laws in states and local school districts, advocates will need to direct their lobbying to those elites who have power and are major policy actors (Marshall et al., 1989). Insiders such as individual members of state legislatures should receive most of their attention followed by members of the Near Circle which includes state departments of public instruction. It would not be as important to continuously lobby the

state board of education or administrator's association which constitute the Far Circle and Sometime Players.

Once the state policy actors have been identified and appropriate persons have been identified to lobby them, one has to fashion strategies that asks “what are the special conditions of the state?” (Sacken & Medina, 1990, p. 391). Since state resources drive policy, it would be important to focus on areas for curriculum revision which do not require additional resources. Some state legislatures, for example, do not conclude in a timely manner due to partisan debates concerning how to locate additional monies to raise teacher salaries and equip schools with technology resources. Another operational principle to consider is the attitude toward education which exists in many states.

For example, despite the state’s ABC’s program for accountability, North Carolina has historically maintained one of the best university systems in the country with UNC-Chapel Hill as the flagship, but has not prioritized making the state's public schools a national model for excellence.[iii] Despite producing thirty years of research regarding the efficacy of multicultural education, multicultural scholars still compete with the standards movement (Stotsky, 1999). In order to understand this phenomenon in a national and state context, the next section of this chapter discusses national, state, and local drop our reform. This discussion serves as a backdrop for introducing a qualitative study of student perceptions of the impact of a multicultural curriculum on their academic achievement in North Carolina’s first early/middle college high school.

Dropout Reform

Scholars provide different solutions for how schools might begin to retire functionalist notions about schooling in order to attack the long standing problem of students

dropping out of school. The National Dropout Prevention Center (Hupfield, 2007) offers four recommendations for dropout prevention programs. First, since students do not drop out of school for only one reason, programs should address multiple risk factors. Second, multiple strategies should be utilized and aligned with risk factors. Third, educators should fully implement resiliency based programs as designed. And finally, educators should evaluate programs to ensure their effectiveness.

In addition to implementing and evaluating dropout programs, a recent body of literature suggests that school leadership must also confront biases held by school personnel that serve as inherent barriers to high student achievement for poor and minority students (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Dantley (2005) posits that what is really needed is purpose-driven leadership that tackles hard questions about the purpose of schools and who is best served by them. Dantley and Tillman (2005) define social justice leadership as leadership that interrogates such policies and procedures that benefit the majority at the expense of the minority. The next sections of this chapter discuss literature on national dropout reform, state dropout reform in North Carolina, and the development of early/middle college high schools as a dropout reform strategy in a local school district.

National Dropout Reform

Scholars estimate that the national graduation rate is only 69.9% and that a student drops out every nine seconds (Hupfield, 2007; Jerald, 2006). Additionally, the national dropout rates for White and Black students indicate that the Black dropout rate has been 1.5 to 2 times higher than the White dropout rate for the past 30 years (Kaufman et al., 2000; Lee, 2002). Similar to the minority achievement gap trend discussed earlier in this chapter, the White-Black dropout rate gap narrowed in the 1970s and 1980s but increased in the

1990s. Various dropout reform initiatives in the United States have produce varied and inconclusive results. The National Association of Secondary Principals (2004) acknowledges that too often national reforms have been conservative and inadequate. Only recently has the focus on school reform and dropout reduction begun to address the impact of social dislocation and traditional school operating procedures on student achievement, particularly for students who have defensive world views (Malloy & Malloy, 1997).

In part due to the historic impact of functionalist thinking, schools have been slow to institute reforms that keep drop-outs in school. Tyack and Cuban (1995) have shown that there exists a historical tension between Americans' deep beliefs in education and the gradual change of educational practices. Rather than continuing to "tinker" with school reform, these scholars suggest that reformers ought to "take a broader view of the aims that should guide public education and focus on the ways to improve instruction from the inside out rather than the top down" (p. 134).

A common strand in this literature suggests that changes in classroom practice are keys to attacking the dropout problem. For example, because her research locates the source of Black student failures "within the nexus of speech and language interaction patterns" (p. 467) of teachers and students, Ladson-Billings (1995b) pioneered the idea of a "culturally relevant pedagogy." She suggests that teachers must be skillful in satisfying district testing requirements but also engage students with multiple forms of critical analysis that must include culturally relevant curriculum material. Delpit (1995) contends that cultural differences must be addressed before a school can develop a language to discuss solutions:

> When a significant difference exists between students' culture, teachers can easily misread students' aptitudes, intent, or abilities as a result of the difference in style of language and interact ional patterns. Secondly, when such cultural differences exist, teachers may utilize styles of instruction and/or discipline that are at odds with

> community norms. . . . When teachers do not understand the potential of the students they teach, they will under teach them no matter what the methodology. (pp. 167, 175)

Responding to problems with unchecked assimilation, Nieto (1999) advocates an additive or multicultural form of identity that affirms students' cultures and is mutually negotiated between and among students, families, and teachers. Other scholars agree that transforming schools into equity cultures begins with the work of teachers in classrooms. Wilbur (1998) argues that, rather than top down mandates, teachers must have the power to change the structures within which they do their work and time to reflect on how they can do their work better. A key part of this involves questioning "tacit cultural beliefs and reflecting on how education aims are realized in daily practice" (p. 143).

A second common strand in much of the existing literature about the achievement gap and dropout prevention is that schools need to enact a prescribed set of school reform initiatives. As discussed in the previous section, scholars have different views about whether the most important reforms rest with leadership or with classroom teachers. In recent years, these scholars have moved beyond advocating mere structural or organizational reforms, but have also begun to address issues related to culture and curriculum relevance.

One must look at the impact of reform in general because school reform literature has an implied (rather than explicit) focus on dropout prevention. Reformers suggest that reform initiatives that are instituted with fidelity will positively impact achievement gaps and dropout prevention. For example, Datnow (2000) discusses how and why schools adopt reforms over a period of four years and provides four significant findings. First, she highlights the shift in recent years away from local reforms in favor of external reform organizations. Although she says little is known about how school actually go about adopting

reforms, we do know that the 1994 reauthorization of Title I legislation provided millions of dollars to states for comprehensive reform programs. Second, reform adoptions tend to be very hierarchical and teachers have a powerless role in the adoption process. Third, power relations among elites affected buy-in among school staff. Fourth, although practitioners and scholars advocate external comprehensive reform, few studies have actually examined the sustainability of reforms over long periods of time, in part because reforms tend not to last (Datnow, 2005).

Desimone (2002) investigated how Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) school reform models can be successfully implemented. She identifies three waves of comprehensive reform. The first wave followed publication of "A Nation at Risk" in 1983 and focused on systemic changes, such as regulations and increasing standards. The second wave focused on enhancing school and family relationships, needs of special groups of students, and recruitment and retention of teachers. Some notable external reforms include Coalition of Essential Schools, The Comer School Development Program, and Success for All. The third and most effective wave to date focused on improving teaching and learning and the delivery of instruction by focusing on whole schools versus individual subjects, programs, or methods of school structures.

A recent federally funded study of the 18 most widely used school improvement programs suggests that they have little or no effectiveness (Viadero, 2006). Officials of The School Reform Quality Center at the American Institutes of Research studied programs that were used in at least 40 sites in three states. They investigated the impact on diverse student populations, parent involvement, and school support. Four programs were rated as having moderate effectiveness: America's Choice, Comer School Development Program (Yale

University), Success for All, and Talent Development High School (John Hopkins University). Six programs had limited effectiveness: Expeditionary Learning, First Things First, Knowledge is Power (KIPP), Middle Start, More Effective Schools, and Project Grad. Four well-established programs received zero ratings: High Schools That Work, Accelerated Schools PLUS, Coalition of Essential Schools, and Modern Red Schoolhouse.

The success of the Baltimore Public Schools, as evidenced in a study conducted by Stringfield and Yakimowski-Srebnick (2005) from 1992 through 2003, suggests that large scale reform might take place without district leadership choosing popular external reform models. The Baltimore Public Schools embarked on three stages of internal reform. The first phase involved testing and measuring; the second phase involved government and leadership changes, funding, and partnerships with the state of Maryland; and the third phase involves current efforts to implement *No Child Left Behind* requirements. The shared-accountability among school staff, district leadership, the state legislature, and governor proved to be a key ingredient to improved test scores and a double digit increase in the graduation rate.

In contrast to school reform in a large district or city, Darling-Hammond and Illfill-Lynch (2006) studied some of the most successful urban schools in New York and Massachusetts. They and other scholars have established the utility of small schools like the Middle College at LaGuardia Community College (the country's first Middle College High School), the Julia Richman Educational Complex, and Central Park East. These are small high schools that boast high college matriculation rates with mostly poor students. They tout a collaborative teacher culture that supports collegial problem solving. Faculty focus on changing students' beliefs and behavior by building relationships with students and

rethinking their own views about the purpose and nature of assigned homework, student motivation, and how to demystify school work.

Based on these research studies, one might reconsider the dropout question vis á vis the commonly held assumption in the United States that all students have the potential to graduate from the traditional, comprehensive American high schools. Several points seem to under gird this assumption. First, most states require students to attend school until they are sixteen. Second, high schools are provided to all students free of charge. And third, until recently, there were few if any non-traditional high schools except perhaps alternative schools for students who present discipline problems. In recent years, in part due to federal legislation, schools have begun to take a closer look at how many students are completing high schools and how many drop out before completion.

One might question how the alarmingly high dropout rate is impacted by the functionalist assumption that all students have the potential to complete their studies in a traditional, comprehensive high school. Rather than continuing to tinker with instructional or disciplinary programs, North Carolina policy makers have begun to examine this long held assumption and to reconsider the causes of student failure. As a result, the leadership of Governor Mike Easley and the North Carolina New Schools Project has proposed new designs structures and principles for high schools.

The next section of this chapter presents literature from scholars who suggest that despite these national dropout reform strategies, school designs, policies, and operating procedures have remained consistently problematic and continue to negatively impact students based on their race, class, gender, and cultural differences. Moreover, these scholars suggest that as school populations grow increasingly diverse, the achievement gap and

disproportionately high dropout rates can be ameliorated by implementing multicultural education in schools and school districts. The scholars make a strong case for redesigning the nation's high schools utilizing multicultural curricula in order to produce more equitable outcome for diverse students.

State Dropout Reform

The statewide graduation rate for North Carolina's class of 2007 was 69.5% (New Schools Project, 2007). This was up one percent from 2006 and was almost identical to the national graduation rate. To combat this negative trend, the North Carolina General Assembly allocated $7 million to address this crisis. A Committee on Dropout Prevention composed of educators, business representatives, and community advocates was created to decide how to best use these dollars for innovative prevention efforts. In addition, a sixteen member legislative committee was created to evaluate dropout reform initiatives, including the Learn and Earn early/middle college high schools that are supported by the North Carolina New Schools Project.

Profile of North Carolina dropouts. According to a Rose D. Friedman Foundation study published in the *Raleigh News and Observer* in October 2007, approximately 38,135 students dropped out of North Carolina public schools in 2005 (Hui, 2007). The study provides the first specific dollar amount for the costs of dropouts to the state. It estimates that North Carolina has about 716,000 high school dropouts between 20 and 64 years old and a state loss of $169 million in annual taxes and public spending. When one considers that the total public cost for every dropout is $4,437 annually compared to the $4,877 that the state spends per pupil, it is critically important to identify who the students are who drop out of school and the reasons why they drop out.

A review of who North Carolina drop-outs are and why they drop out of school suggest three interesting observations. Each of these points support the notion that high dropout rates in North Carolina have less to do with academic ability and more to do with school organizational barriers (as evidenced by the fact that 1 out of 3 dropout events occur in the ninth grade), highly charged negative experiences, and cultural conflict in the classroom (New Schools Project, 2004a). First, although the state's average dropout rate in 2006 was 1.7%, it was higher for all students of color except Asians. The dropout rate was 1.8% for Blacks, 2.0% for American Indians, and 2.1% for Hispanics. If one analyzes data from the five most populated counties, the rate for Blacks is much higher. The second salient observation relates to why these students drop out of school. State reports indicate that nearly 60 percent of the reasons given by schools for these dropouts involved attendance and only 7% of the reasons involved academic issues during the 2005-2006 school year.

A third data observation is that the North Carolina's 4.7% dropout rate in 2004-2005 is misleading when one juxtaposes this statistic with a 68% four year graduation rate. To hide actual dropout rates, most school districts report as drop-outs only students who do not return to school at the beginning of the next year while ignoring all other dropouts over the other three years (Peterson, 2005)[iv]. This is how the four year graduation rate can be inconsistent with the drop-out rate (New Schools Project, 2004). Due to both federal requirements that states report their four year graduation rate as part of their AYP report card and concerns that some formulas are more susceptible to fluctuations in individual school populations (Franklin & Crain-Dorough, 2006), the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction is currently creating a new graduation rate formula that is expected to be used in 2007.[v]

North Carolina political culture. North Carolina political culture, like many other states, is traditionalistic and focused on standards over equity. Sleeter (2000) notes that although enormous discrepancies exist among curriculum resources, teachers, and facilities, multicultural education will suffer unless state officials prioritize equity as well as excellence. With this in mind, state reformers would benefit from developing a multicultural policy proposal that is aligned at the state and local levels. Perhaps most important, there are four key assumptive world questions that must be answered before any policy can be successfully implemented at the state level (Marshall et. al., 1989). They include who has the right to initiate policy, what policy ideas are deemed unacceptable, what policy mobilizing activities are deemed appropriate, and what are the special conditions of the state.

In North Carolina one must gear the multi-cultural education policy to the interests of the state legislature. The General Assembly legislates school policy and charges the State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction with carrying out its mandates. The state political culture is highly traditionalistic which means that policies tend to maintain the existing order (Mazzoni, 1991). Thus, new programs are usually initiated if they serve the interest of the governing elite, not because groups at the margins argue their utility or the moral value. In addition, involvement in politics in such traditionalistic states is viewed as a privilege for those with a legitimate claim to participate. It is highly personal and based on family and social ties as well as the dominant values of these groups. A key assumptive world rule to note is that the way things are done in such "good ole boy" systems is not always synonymous with written policies and procedures (Marshall, 1985).

Since the current dominant value among policy elites is rigor, or excellence as measured by ABCs standardized tests, reformers would have to draft a multi-cultural policy

proposal that can be linked to successful student performance. Mazzoni (1991) informs us that policy arenas always involve mobilization of bias. It is important to present this policy in its most favorable light and to de-emphasize those areas that conflict with the ruling elite. To do otherwise might lead to an arena shift. Reformers must market different aspects of the multi-cultural education policy proposal to the four state policy making arenas. For the subsystem, commission, and leadership arenas (which include committee lawmakers, prominent individuals, and top level executive and legislative office holders), one would argue that multi-cultural education would get more poorly performing groups interested in their learning because they would be more likely to study information about their own lives and cultures. Aggregate ABCs end-of-course test scores would rise as a result. For the macro arena (which consists of top level executives doing public relations work via television and mass media), one would lobby persons at grassroots levels in order to bring popular and constituency pressure to bear on legislative decision making.

As reformers enlist support at the grassroots level, they must pay close attention to how the issue is defined and the meanings attached to the term multicultural education (Placier, 1993). Definitions of the term are important elements in policy construction. Multi-cultural education cannot become labeled as multiple add-ons of information about myriad cultures, nor can it be labeled as a means to erode all previously accepted Western values. In order to ensure implementation, the term must be promoted as enhancing existing curricula, not destroying them.

Selection of the individuals who will promote the policy is as important as how the policy is defined. Ida Ortiz provides a good example of how policy proposals can be negatively associated with the leader despite whether or not it is a good policy (Ortiz &

Ortiz, 1993). Moreover, when a person's race and or gender are utilized for symbolic purposes, their actions are more likely to become politicized. This suggests that it would advantageous to enlist a diverse group of multi-cultural education advocates to lobby the state's citizens and legislators.

In addition, scholars note that multicultural education advocates would benefit from understanding three dominant paradigms in educational organizational change theory (Scheurich & Imber, 1991). Functionalism holds that technical knowledge and expert control are important. Managers set policy in a management oriented, top-down approach. Culturalism holds that one must understand the culture within and without the organization in order to change it. The people and or culture should set policy, although this does not always happen. The critical theorists, on the other hand, focus on relationships within the organization. They believe all groups should be represented on committee decision-making teams in proportion to the percentage of the constituency they make up. Scholars encourage initiators of multi-cultural education policy to employ all of these perspectives at different times, depending on the groups with which they seek to build bridges.

North Carolina dropout reform strategies. Current dropout reform strategies in North Carolina are consistent with the political culture of the state. As previously noted, this traditionalistic political culture emphasizes excellence (standards) over equity. Schools are measured and possibly sanctioned based on their dropout rates under the provisions of the state ABCs Accountability Program and the federal No Child Left Behind legislation. In North Carolina, statistics show that only 60 out of 100 ninth grade students graduate from high school in four years (New Schools Project, 2004a). One might confront the assumption in one of two ways. First, one can locate the 40% dropout rate as a problem inherent in many

North Carolina students. Or, one might challenge the assumption that all students can complete their education in public traditional high schools or alternate setting within existing design structures. The researcher notes that several dropout initiatives have occurred in traditional and alternative schools (including block scheduling, High Schools That Work, a plethora of reading programs, evening schools, alternative schools, etc.) but the focus of this study will be relatively new Learn and Earn early/middle college high schools.

Since 2001, newly created middle college high schools in Guilford County, North Carolina provide an opportunity to analyze this assumption. These non-traditional high schools provide school structures and new lenses to analyze what school leaders (and teachers) do in redesigned high schools to decrease suspensions and dropouts, to increase graduation rates, and close the achievement gap. These kinds of schools began spreading across the state of North Carolina in 2003 as a result of Governor Mike Easley's formation of The New Schools Project (NSP) in 2003. Each of these schools is required to serve a diverse student population and to provide a rigorous and relevant curriculum.

It is significant to note that even though the dropout rate and achievement gap have been a persistent problem for 40 years, The North Carolina New Schools Project high school reform initiative is the first statewide initiative aimed at redesigning and restructuring high schools in the United States (Early College High School Initiative, 2004; Galley, 2002; Hoffman & Vargas, 2004). The requirement to have a relevant curriculum has the potential of utilizing multicultural education as a dropout reform strategy, a strategy advocated by decades of research. Equally significant is the expressed belief within the New Schools Project that the traditional high school is not (and one might argue, never was) designed to serve all students (New Schools Project, 2004b).

In 2001, the first two middle college high schools in North Carolina opened in Guilford County, with The Middle College at GTCC (Jamestown campus) and The Middle College at Greensboro College. Both are independent public high schools on college campuses that provide students with opportunities to complete their high school classes and take classes for college credit. The goals of the middle colleges are to reduce the dropout rate, increase graduation and college attendance rates, and to improve student performance, increase self-esteem, and help more students make the connection between high school and college (Grier & Peterson, 2007). The success of these schools in helping to reduce the district's dropout rate by 50 percent from 2001-2004 led to the creation of more middle college high schools in Guilford County (Manzo, 2005; Quindlen, 2006; Sellars, 2006). They include the Middle College at Bennett College (North Carolina's only all female public high school), the Middle College at NC A&T State University (North Carolina's only all male public high school), and two additional GTCC Middle College High Schools located on satellite campuses in Greensboro and High Point.[vi]

North Carolina New Schools Project. After witnessing the successful creation of middle college high schools in Guilford County in 2001, North Carolina Governor Mike Easley formed a planning committee to create more "early/middle" college high schools statewide in 2002. Under the umbrella of the North Carolina New Schools Project, the governor's staff helped to create a partnership among the governor's cabinet, the University of North Carolina, the North Carolina Community College System, SERVE, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Building on the 1972 Middle College concept (Lieberman, 2004), the Governor announced a record $11 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates

Foundation for North Carolina to start the New Schools Project and create new smaller schools that better prepare students for college and work.

The New Schools Project began by launching eight new Health Science-themed schools in districts across the state in partnership with local hospitals and the health care workforce. Of particular interest in this study are the "Learn and Earn" early college high schools that pair community colleges or universities with high schools to create a new model of high school.[vii] In these *Learn and Earn* schools, students will earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree from community college or two years of university credit toward a four-year degree by the time they graduate from high school. On the day that grants were awarded to the five initial sites, the governor remarked that

> Learn and Earn will provide a new model of high school that will boost graduation rates, boost college-going rates, and boost the preparedness of our students to work in an economy that demands knowledge, talent and skills. Learn and Earn will change North Carolina high schools so that students receive the skills and training they need for high-skilled, better-paying jobs. If students know that they can graduate with practical job skills and an advanced degree, they will have an additional incentive to complete their degree before entering the workforce. (New Schools Project, 2004a, p. 1)

The governor's staff suggests that the Learn and Earn initiative has the potential to place North Carolina at the forefront of high school and dropout reform efforts nationwide. They also are optimistic about the initiative's ability to positively improve the transition to higher education and the twenty first century workplace (New Schools Project, 2004a). In August 2004, the New Schools Project identified five initial Learn and Earn sites: Buncombe, Catawba, Durham, Guilford, and Nash counties. Of these five, only the Middle College Guilford Technical Community College-Jamestown[viii] was in existence prior to the creation of the New Schools Project. The ten additional sites opened in 2005 in the following counties: Anson, Chatham, Cumberland, Davidson, Edgecombe, Iredell, New Hanover,

Robeson, Rutherford, and Sampson counties. Twenty additional Learn and Earn early college high schools will open across the state during the 2006-2007 school year (New Schools Project, 2006).

The five goals of New School Project/Learn and Earn early college high schools are to:

- continue the process of designing curriculum and support structures that ensure the attainment of an associate's degree and/or two years of transferable college credit at no cost to the student;
- develop a plan to serve a diverse population of up to 400 students in terms of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, academic ability, achievement, and motivation (comparable to GCS district level demographics);
- incorporate work-based learning experiences and internships for every student;
- design and implement affective and academic systems of support to help students attain the high expectations presented by the early/middle college model; and
- partner with middle schools to prepare rising freshmen for the early college experience. (New Schools Project, 2004b, p. 11)

This primary focus of this study is goal number two which mandates that early/middle college high schools serve a diverse student body and provide a rigorous and relevant curriculum.

Although college campuses are more diverse today than they were forty years ago, access to post-secondary education, retention, and graduation rates are still closely aligned with income, race, and family educational background (Hoffman, 2003). Early and middle college high schools follow five design principles that include ready for college, powerful teaching and learning, personalization, redefine professionalism, and purposeful design.[ix] All of these schools are required to serve a diverse student population and to adopt the Rigor, Relevance, Relationships Framework. One must understand the origins and components of this framework (see Figure 2) in order to understand how a relevant curriculum relates to scholarship on multicultural education.

Local Dropout Reform

Early/middle college high schools in Guilford County have helped the district to become a state and national leader in dropout reduction (Guilford County Schools, 2007). In 2004-2005, the district won the prestigious Crystal Star Award from the National Dropout Prevention Center. The district's dropout rate was cut in half from 5.97% in 2000 to 2.98% in 2005, which was the lowest of the six largest school districts in North Carolina. This includes Charlotte-Mecklenburg (3.14%), Cumberland County (3.33%), Durham County (5.71%), Forsyth County (5.00%), and Wake County (3.66%). The Guilford County School district continued to maintain this low dropout rate from 2005 through 2007. In addition to other successful initiatives, the superintendent credits six middle college high schools in the district for their role in dropout reduction.

Early/Middle College in Guilford County. A small body of research on early/middle college high schools North Carolina has developed very recently. Sellars (2006) conducted a qualitative study of the impact of a middle college high school on Black male students and how these students make sense of their learning environment. She interviewed 15 seniors who were selected by the principal of the school and concluded that the school program and experienced teachers were more effective at meeting the needs of Black male students than traditional high schools. In addition to calling for more research on middle college high schools, Sellars provided five recommendations that include (a) giving students more voice in the curriculum, (b) providing caring and sensitive mentors for all students, (c) hiring highly qualified teachers who meet students learning styles, (d) teachers inspecting what they expect and principal monitoring classrooms regularly, and (e) providing small class sizes that include differentiated instruction.

Bruce (2007) conducted a qualitative study of the perceptions, motivations, and achievement of 12 Black students (6 male and 6 female) enrolled in North Carolina's first early/middle college high school. She analyzed data collected through a blended theoretical framework of resiliency and self-efficacy theory. The study identified four themes related to the school structure that include (a) healthy relationships between teachers and students, (b) students identify themselves as smart, (c) student access to college courses and postsecondary opportunities, and (d) students embracing personal responsibility and the self-efficacy toward reaching their goals. One of Bruce's recommendations for further research involves "a study that analyzes the student voices in this study . . . through other theoretical frameworks" (p. 157) in order to better understand the impact of this reform initiative on Black students.

Building on the Bruce study, this dissertation provides voice to students through a different conceptual framework. Through student interviews using Banks' (2001) five dimensions of multicultural education, the researcher describes in chapter 4 the degree to which the school's multicultural curriculum affected the academic of students. The 10 students in this study are the same students who participated in the Bruce study as high school juniors and seniors in 2006. Most of these students had poor attendance and/or grades before enrolling in the early/middle college high school. Descriptions from student interviews will contribute to the scholarly literature on multicultural education as a dropout reform strategy as well as extend Bruce's suggestion that scholars investigate the impact of reform initiatives on Black students.

Summary

Scholars have published a new wave of literature on schools that claim to have reduced their dropout rates and increased student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Illfill-Lynch, 2006; Deakin & Curran, 2004). Bill and Melinda Gates publicly stated their belief that today's public high school is obsolete and they committed millions of dollars for high school reform efforts that have promise in reducing high school dropout rates (Hendrie, 2005). Since 2002, several states, most notably North Carolina, have applied for and received millions of Gates' dollars to redesign large comprehensive high schools and to create new smaller schools.

The next chapter of this study discusses the methodology the researcher used to identify and describe former students' perceptions of how a multicultural curriculum impacted their academic achievement. Since the 10 Black graduates were former drop-outs or potential dropouts, their perceptions will help inform scholarly research, educational practice, and state leaders associated with the North Carolina New Schools Project. According to December 27th, 2006 edition of the CBS Evening News, the North Carolina Learn and Earn Early/Middle College dropout reform initiative has the potential to serve as a national model for high school reform. Governor Mike Easley and students from high schools in Guilford and Durham counties were featured in this news segment. These news stories coincide with a new body of scholarly research have regarding the efficacy of the new early and middle college high schools that are a part of the state's reform initiative (Erardi, 2004; Quindlen, 2006; Sellars, 2006). The efficacy of a multicultural curriculum in these schools in significantly reducing dropouts is a topic that merits scholarly research, including qualitative case studies of these schools.

[i] For example, in Guilford County Schools (North Carolina's third largest school district) 80% of African American students quality for free-reduced lunch compared to 20 percent of white students.

[ii] Article IX, Section 2 of the state constitution states "The General Assembly shall provide by taxation and otherwise for a general and uniform system of free public schools, which shall be maintained at least nine months in every year, and wherein equal opportunities shall be provided for all students."

[iii] Former Governor Jim Hunt authored a book in 2001 entitled First in America: an education governors challenges North Carolina. (Raleigh, NC : First in America Foundation)

[iv] While completing a graduate research project for EDUC 239 I discovered dropout numbers can be easily obscured. My group completed a district wide instructional improvement plan for Lee County Schools where 24 percent of the students are African-American and 21 percent are Hispanic. We found that the district outperforms all neighboring districts of Wake, Durham, Chapel Hill-Carrboro, Orange, Harnett, and Johnston in federal AYP report cards and state ABCs report card. However, the district's dropout rate for was 7%, much higher than the state average of 4.7%. This study suggests the importance of simultaneously reviewing academic achievement data, dropout rates, and four year graduation rates.

[v] The National Governors Association advocates using the "Cumulative Graduation Index" formula. When used in November 2006 in Guilford County, North Carolina, one high school saw its graduation rate dive from 87.6% to 48.3%. This and other conflicting statistical calculations are serving as impetus for the state to finalize its "true four year graduation rate formula" in 2007.

[vi] Janet Lieberman, psychology professor at LaGuardia Community College in New York is credited with creating the Middle College concept in 1972. The model was originally designed as an alternate school placement for students at high risk of dropping out of school. The hallmarks of the first such school included smaller class sizes, the power of a college campus to transform students, and intense academic and affective support strategies. What separate this initiative from other dropout reform programs is the intentional plan to integrate high school students into a college campus environment and to have the them begin to view themselves as college material. The researcher wishes to point out that the Middle College high schools in North Carolina have some variations that include student populations (at risk students vs. honors level students, racial and socio-economic student diversity levels), grades served, purpose, and some schools, such as the Middle College at Durham Technical Community College are not affiliated with the North Carolina New Schools Project's Learn and Earn grant initiative.

[vii] Across North Carolina, the terms middle and early college are often used interchangeably. Middle Colleges are small high schools located on college campuses (enrollment capped at 135 in Guilford County) and provide students opportunities to take college courses. The number of courses completed, if any, varies from student to student. Early Colleges, according to Governor Easley's definition, are small high schools (up to 400 students) located on college campuses where students are expected to complete a two-year associates degree in four or five years. The state's first early college, The Early College at Guilford, was opened in 2002 as a partnership between Guilford County Schools and Guilford College.

[viii] In August 2004, the Middle College at GTCC changed its name to "The Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown." The reasons were two-fold. First, the school affiliated with the North Carolina New Schools Project's Learn and Earn program which called for the creation of early college high schools across the state. Second, because Guilford County planned to open two additional schools on the GTCC High Point and Greensboro campuses, "Jamestown" was added to the name to distinguish schools.

[ix] From 2004-2007, the New Schools Project advocated six different design principles that include power of the site, teaching and learning, student support, student assessment, democratic governance, and professional development. These design principles were changed to five new ones in 2007. Ready for college means that schools will overcome tracking and prepare all students for college and work. Require powerful teaching and learning means that schools will focus on critical thinking, application, and problem solving. Personalization means that understanding students well is a condition of academic achievement. Redefine professionalism

means that school faculties will share responsibility for creating a vision that collaborative, creative, and involves individual and group leadership roles. Faculties are to take responsibility for student learning, be accountable to each other, and be reflective about their role. Purposeful design means that the school's organization, time, space, and resources are allocated in such a way that the other four design principles become common practice in the school. See www.newschoolsproject.org for further information.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

> *Change where it counts the most, in the daily interactions of teachers and students, is the hardest to achieve and the most important . . . Policy talk about educational reform has been replete with extravagant claims for innovations that flickered and faded.* (Tyack & Cuban, 1995)

Purpose

This qualitative dissertation identifies and describes recent early/middle college graduates' perceptions of how a multicultural curriculum impacted their academic achievement. It is based on goal number two of the North Carolina New Schools Project's Learn and Earn initiative, which requires that early/middle college high schools serve a diverse student body and provide a rigorous and relevant curriculum. The perceptions of 10 Black graduates of North Carolina's first Early/Middle College High School at Guilford Technical Community College-Jamestown campus will contribute to a very limited body of research on early/middle college high schools in North Carolina (Bruce, 2007; Sellars, 2006).

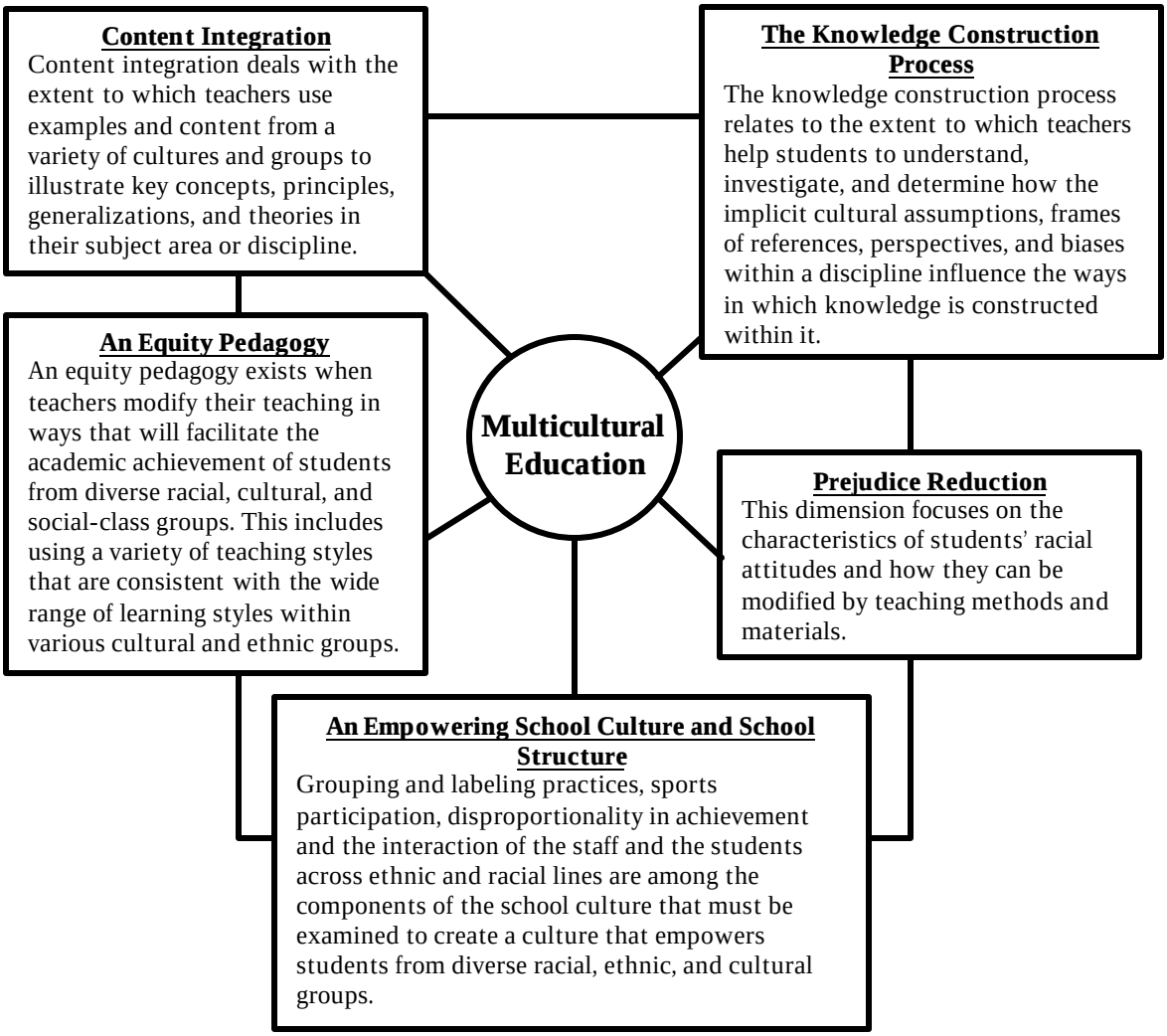
Conceptual Framework: Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education

The author chose to use James Banks' (2001) five dimensions of multicultural education framework as a lens to gather and interpret data for this qualitative case study.[i] The five dimensions are content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure. Content integration refers to how classroom teachers integrate content and examples of concepts from diverse cultures. Knowledge construction refers to how teachers help students recognize and

understand cultural assumptions and bias in curricula. An equity pedagogy refers to the extent to which teachers modify instruction to meet the learning styles and needs of diverse student groups. And, an empowering school culture and social structure refers to the extent to which diverse student groups experience equal status in classrooms and in schools.

During the process of reviewing literature on multicultural education, the researcher considered four conceptual frameworks for inclusion in this study. They include Banks' (2001) Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education (see Appendixes A and B); Nieto's (1999) Multicultural Educator Self-Assessment (see Appendix C); Duran's (2002) Equitable School Self Review (see Appendix D); and the North Central Regional Laboratory's (1995) Multicultural School Checklist (see Appendix E). The researcher selected Bank's Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education framework for four reasons. First, this framework represents a seminal piece of multicultural literature and has been most widely quoted by scholars since first published in 1995. Second, the framework is comprehensive in that it speaks to pedagogical practices by teachers in all classrooms, not just content integration in social studies or literature. It also provides a critical analysis of the specific content that is taught as part of the written and hidden curriculum, and provides an assessment of the overall school culture. Third, the five dimensions in this framework (content integration, equity pedagogy, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, and empowering school culture and structure) are more manageable for this study than the other frameworks that might include more components. And finally, the five dimensions provide ideal vehicles for the participants in this study to share their perceptions about the curriculum and structure of North Carolina's first early/middle college high school and the extent to which issues of race,

class, gender, and cultural differences were addressed, and how this impacted their student achievement and dropout status.



Source: Banks, J. A. (2001). *Cultural diversity and education: Foundations, curriculum and teaching* (4th ed.) (p. 5). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Figure 1. ***Conceptual Framework: Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education***

Major Research Question[ii]

What do former students believe about how the structure and curriculum at the Early/Middle College at Guilford Technical Community College High School-Jamestown (GTCC EMCHS-J) affected their academic achievement?

Research Questions

This study will focus on the following five research questions from Banks' (2001) dimensions of multicultural education:

1. What do interview responses from former students suggest about the existence of content integration using examples from a variety of cultures?
2. What do interview responses from former students suggest about the existence of an equity pedagogy wherein teachers modify their instruction for diverse students?
3. What do interview responses from former students suggest about the existence of knowledge construction processes wherein teachers help students understand bias within disciplines?
4. What do interview responses from former students suggest about the existence of prejudice reduction wherein teachers address racial attitudes as a part of the curriculum?
5. What do interview responses from former students suggest about the existence of an empowering school structure and social structure for diverse students?

Rationale for Qualitative Study

The researcher of this study wishes to provide voice to students who graduated from North Carolina's first early/middle college high school instead of merely studying how the school's structure, size, and location differ from traditional high schools. Too often, as Marshall (1985) notes, "the dominant paradigm assumes that our organizational problems come from (a) ignorance or lack of motivation of the populace, (b) ignorance or lack of

motivation of public sector professionals and bureaucrats, or (c) the lack of sufficient resources" (p. 360).

This qualitative research seeks to provide a richer, fuller explanation than a quantitative study could provide of how students interpret the impact of school design and curricula on student achievement for a diverse group of students, including students who had dropped out of traditional school. While there are a plethora of statistical studies about students who drop out of traditional high schools (American Diploma Project, 2004; Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison, 2006; NCES, 2004), a deeper understanding of student perceptions of their schools is needed to understand if and how students might potentially perform better at early/middle college high schools. Cizek (1995), a quantitative researcher, cautioned against the use of quantitative methods when trying to better understand teacher or student behaviors. He noted that "the results of regression analysis are presented in terms that are too black and white. We need to get to know these teachers" (p. 26). The researcher suggests that the same is true of students.

Qualitative research methods can provide descriptions and meaning that might remain hidden in quantitative research. Marshall and Rossman (1999) noted that "qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people" (p. 2). Similarly, Taylor and Bogdan (1998) noted that qualitative methodology "produces descriptive data-people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior" (p. 7). By providing what Creswell (2005) refers to as a constructivist perspective, the research study aims to provide multiple meanings of individual experiences, develop patterns, and promote advocacy.

Researcher Role

Since "trustworthiness or research validity is an issue that should be thought about during the research design as well as in the midst of data collection" (Glesne, 2006, p. 37), the researcher wishes to disclose two sampling issues to which he has sensitized himself. The first problem involves a constant reminder about how to approach the topic. Since the researcher is a practicing school administrator of the school in the study, he must resist a natural interest in narrowly writing about the efficacy of this new high school concept in terms of being an effective tool for raising student achievement and decreasing high school dropouts. It is important to ground these interests into a theoretical construct. "By linking the specific research question to larger theoretical constructs or to important policy issues, the writer shows that the particulars of the study serve to illuminate larger issues, and therefore, hold potential significance for that field" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 28). The research focus then revolves around the five dimensions of multicultural education proposed by Banks (2001). Descriptions of student responses to interview questions do not support predetermined norms, labels, linguistic expressions, understandings and assumptions that people use to make sense of their everyday experiences (Patton, 1990). Rather, these descriptions involve students "making sense of an ongoing process that cannot be predicted in advance (Rubin & Babbie, 1997).

The second issue this researcher considered involved how to place students at ease during the interviews if they are preoccupied with the interviewer's position as a high school principal. Since the students are accustomed to seeing administrators, some are likely to act as they normally do while other students may perceive the researcher as invasive. The researcher made efforts to satisfy Geer's (1964) criteria of "selecting a neutral, approachable

role in the sense of acting and speaking in ways which are not threatening to informants smoothes the first days of participant observation" (pp. 144-162). By addressing this issue forthright and defining an appropriate role, the researcher attempted to capitalize on subtle nuances, behaviors, and descriptions provided by students.

Site Selection

Guilford County is North Carolina's third largest district and the subject of this study. The district was born in 1993 when the former Greensboro City, High Point, and Guilford County school districts consolidated. It has an annual operating budget of $511,695,680 and 9,700 full and part-time employees (Guilford County Schools, 2007). There are 70,426 students who populate 116 schools in the district that include 65 elementary schools, 22 middle schools, 26 high schools (including 7 early and/or middle colleges), and 4 special schools. Student demographic ratios have shifted over the past 10 years as students of color have moved from minority status to majority status. The ethnic composition is 0.6% American Indian, 4.4% Asian, 40.7% Black, 6% Hispanic, 44.6% White, and 3.7% Multiracial. Over 48% of students in the district qualify for free or reduced priced lunch. Dr. Terry Grier completing his eighth year as superintendent and is charged with ensuring that the district meets three thematic goals during the 2007-08 school year:

- All entering kindergarten students will read at or above grade level by the end of the third grade-end of the 2009-10 school year.
- By the end of the 2008-09 school year, the math achievement gap would be eliminated for 2006-07 sixth graders; while overall math achievement scores would have increased for middle school students.
- All rising ninth grade students, 2006-07 school year, will graduate from high school in four years completing a relevant and rigorous curriculum. (p. 3)

A Learn and Earn high school in Guilford County, North Carolina was selected for this study because Guilford County was the first county in North Carolina to open middle

and early college high schools in 2001. Following careful selections of principals by the superintendent, the first principals of middle college high schools at Guilford Technical Community College-Jamestown Campus and Greensboro College undertook the task of hiring teachers who were effective at connecting disengaged students. Initially, Grier and Peterson (2007) note, "staff and administrators looked for students who had been successful at some point in the schooling but had either dropped out of high school or were in significant academic trouble due to a large number of reasons" (p. 16). The process for student recruitment involved nominations by traditional high school teachers, counselors or principals of students who would thrive in a middle college high school. Students who had dropped out referred their friends who had also dropped out of school. In addition, the school district mounted a public relations campaign in newspapers and radio. As a result, some students were recruited by principals, counselors, and dropout prevention specialists in malls and workplaces. Each student was required to complete an application and participate in a faculty interview before enrolling in the middle college high schools.

Since the first middle college was opened in 2001 until the current 2007-2008 school year, Guilford County's dropout rate has been reduced by 50% over the past seven years from six percent to three percent, the lowest among North Carolina's five largest school districts (Guilford County Schools, 2007). The 2007 graduation rate is 79.7%, which is the highest among North Carolina's five largest school districts. In their discussion of these schools, Grier and Petersen (2007) described the process used to implement these six schools and noted that they "have brought students back into the mainstream path of completing school" (p. 39). Instead of choosing participants for this study, the researcher will involve the same 12 students who participated in the Bruce (2007) study during their senior year. Though

very similar in nature, the Bruce study was concerned with student perceptions of 12 current students relative to student resiliency and self-efficacy theory. These students are now graduates of the school and will be able to reflect on their experiences through different lenses as graduates. In addition, this arrangement prevents conflicts associated with participant selection, protection of subjects, and the researcher's role.

The county currently operates six middle college high schools and one early college high school. The middle college high schools are located at three separate Guilford Technical Community College campuses in Greensboro, Jamestown, and High Point and on the campuses of Bennett College, Greensboro College, and North Carolina A&T State University. A seventh middle college high school is currently being planned as a partnership with the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

The Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown high school was also selected for this study because it as a Learn and Earn high school and because it has a diverse population that most closely matches the student demographics of the school district. The district student population is 54% students of color and 46% White students. The students of color include 40% Black, 5% Hispanic, 4% Asian, 4% Multiracial, and 1% Native American. The population of the Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown is 59% White, 31% Black, 3% Hispanic, 3% multiracial, 2% Asian, and 1% Native American.

This study will focus on the perceptions of 10 Black students who graduated from the Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown. The school opened in August 2004 and is in its second year of existence. The Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown enrolls students in grades 9-12 and communicates the following beliefs on its school website:

> Our faculty is committed to ensuring that all students regardless of race, gender, income level, or disability experience a rigorous and relevant curriculum such that

> 100% graduate in four years and continue their education at GTCC or a four year university. Students who enroll in our school as 9th graders may earn a two-year degree or two years of college credit at no charge. By building positive relationships as our school foundation, it is our goal to meet the needs of every single student who attends our school. We believe strongly that eliminating the drop-out problem in our community and nation ought to be our highest public policy and educational priority. We welcome you to join us in this effort! (www.gcsnc.com, 2007)

Students are encouraged to enroll in college courses or to complete a two year associate degree in the division areas listed in Table 1. In addition to these degree areas, students can also take college transfer classes in literature, mathematics**,** history**,** science, and the arts**.** Through a collaboration agreement between the North Carolina Community College System and the University of North Carolina, students may transfer selected courses to any of the sixteen universities that comprise the University of North Carolina.

Table 1

GTCC EMCHS-J Associate Degree Areas

Arts and Sciences
Biological Technologies
Business Technologies
Commercial and Artistic Production Technologies
Health Sciences
Industrial, Construction, and Engineering Technologies
Public Service Technologies

The Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown enrolls 135 students and provides class sizes of 15 students. The school staff includes a principal, a full-time guidance counselor, 1 SIMS secretary, 2 English teachers, 2 science teacher, 2 math teachers, 1 Spanish teacher, 1 special education teacher, 1 career development coordinator, and 1 instructional support assistant. The school is supported by a liaison who is employed by the college and paid with grant funds provided by the North Carolina New Schools Project/Learn

and Earn Program. The school day begins for students at 11:00 a.m. and ends at 5:00 pm. This school district provides transportation for students who live anywhere in Guilford County.

Participants

Ten Black student graduates participated in this study. All of these students participated in the Bruce (2007) study while they were seniors in high school. Five of these students are Black males and five are Black females. All of the participants attended one of 14 traditional high schools in the Guilford County School District prior to enrolling in the early/middle college high school. In addition, all of the students reported in the Bruce study that they considered dropping out of their traditional high schools before enrolling in the early/middle college high school. The majority of the students had poor attendance, poor grades, problems at home, or other circumstances that influenced their thoughts about whether or not they would drop out of school.

Data Collection

Prior to any contact with these 10 students who graduated from the early/middle college high school in 2006, the researcher followed the UNC Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. As was the case in the Bruce (2007) study, all participants received a written description of the study, its length, and an assurance that participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw their participation at any time, an assurance of confidentiality, and a written consent form. The researcher has not identified any ethical issues other than ensuring a climate exists where students feel free to give open responses in their interviews.

Utilizing qualitative research methods, the researcher conducted open-ended interview questions. Because the students know the researcher as their former principal and

because the students participated in the previous Bruce (2007) study, the researcher ensured that students are asked to answer open ended questions without prodding or verbal or nonverbal feedback from the researcher. As Creswell (2005) notes, interview participants "can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings" (p. 214). As needed, the researcher used probing follow up questions such as why, how, can you tell me more, and can you give more details?

Another data collection strategy involved controlling for bias. The researcher was careful not to align student responses to interview questions with any existing classroom observation tools such as the Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument (TPAI). There exists an inherent conflict between what educational policy makers in North Carolina mandate that principals should expect to be observed in classrooms and the purpose of this research study. Since this study used qualitative research to paint a more comprehensive picture of what students perceive happening in their classrooms relative to Banks (2001) five dimensions of multi-cultural education, a broader classroom context must be considered. The researcher was cognizant to "deliberately consider various explanations and interpretations of the actions of the people involved in order to gain a better understanding of the assumptions that they take for granted" (Angelides, 2001).

Consistent with qualitative methods for data collection, the researcher requested students' permission to record each interview and hire a specialist to transcribe each tape. The researcher made notes and jotted down thoughts without narrow, specific regard for the research problem. The researcher took notes about the participants, what they said and did, their interactions, their conversations, activities, and personal reactions and hunches. These data were recorded chronologically in a Microsoft Word table that has two columns. The first

column included field notes and the second column will included codes and questions that the researcher updated each afternoon (while the data was fresh). The purpose here was to look for patterns, frequently used words, and behaviors (Glesne, 2006).

Students were asked a series of questions (See Appendix A) that are aligned with Banks' (2001) five dimensions of multicultural education. The five dimensions include content integration, equity pedagogy, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, and an empowering school and social structure. For each dimension, the researcher initially analyzed the student responses in terms of the degree of functionalist orientation. The functionalist perspective emphasizes the way that the parts of a society are structured to maintain its stability. Therefore, student responses that spoke to school structures and curricula following standard operating procedures and that benefit students who model dominant group values and behaviors were coded as highly functionalist. Student responses that suggest limited affirmation of race, class, or culture with mixed benefits to students were coded in a table as moderately functionalist. Student responses that suggest that the existence of new school structures and operating procedures and curricula that affirm issues of race, class, gender, and cultural differences with the intentional goal of meeting needs of diverse groups of students, were coded low functionalist or non-functionalist.

Although these three preliminary coding schemes for student data were identified for this study, the researcher altered these codes and developed new coding schemes as data were collected. As Sanjek (1990) found,

> Few ethnographers know from the start that certain topics are of interest and record their data under these heading correctly. Most others, aside from any records only later index their chronologically entered field notes. (p. 387)

The researcher will also remained open to the possibility that in addition to collecting data on how students interpret the impact of their school structures and curricula on student achievement, student participants might also choose to discuss how they act on and interpret these ideas. This notion is especially poignant given the advice of Rubin and Rubin (2005) that "flexibility is much better than persisting in a design that is not working or that doesn't allow you to pursue unexpected insights" (p. 44).

Data Analysis

Creswell (2005) notes that the process of data analysis is eclectic process of making sense of broad information and that this process can take many forms. At the same time, Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002) also caution that data analysis must be a public research process in order to enhance credibility and confirmability:

> The problem is that qualitative researchers do not always provide their readers with detailed explanations of how research questions are related to data sources, how themes or categories are developed, and how triangulation is accomplished. Although researches claim to utilize triangulation and member checks to discuss the development of themes presented, what is actually done is anyone's guess. (p. 30)

To ensure credibility, the researcher of this study utilized four important data analysis strategies. They include efficient and effective coding of data, the five content analysis steps process (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), validity checks to ensure trustworthiness, and triangulation. The first and perhaps most salient data analysis strategy involved the efficient and effective collection of data. Several scholars have noted that data analysis begins during rather than after the data collection process (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). As the data were collected, the researcher organized the data by participant, by issues raised by five research questions in the conceptual framework, and by emergent themes. A coding table was created to show the reader of this study the process the

researcher used to "bring order, structure, and interpretation to the mass of collected data" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 150). Anfara et al. (2002) explain why such tables are so important:

> The purpose of these tables is to enhance the opportunity for criticism and public inspection of qualitative studies-to encourage analytical openness. Using a concept from classical science, refutability, we call for qualitative research to be written with enough clarity and detail so that someone else is able to judge the quality of the study and accept or refute the findings. (p. 33)

Consistent with code mapping procedures, the researcher created initial codes that include surface content analysis during the first iteration. Attention was focused on words, phrases, events, and participants' communication patterns that stand out. These items served as preliminary coding categories. During the second iteration, the researcher identified pattern variables, and during the third iteration, the researcher applied themes to the data set.

This coding process helped the researcher to make sense of the data and to form descriptions. It guided the researcher in identifying the four themes that authors typically use which include ordinary themes, unexpected themes, hard-to-classify themes, and major and minor themes (Creswell, 2005). Utilizing constant comparative analysis techniques (Anfara et al., 2002), the researcher was also able to compare interview responses both within and between each of the five multicultural dimensions in the conceptual framework. These dimensions include content integration, equity pedagogy, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, and empowering school culture and structure.

Efficient and effective data coding also required the researcher to clarify and address issues of bias (Glesne, 2006). For example, each time North Carolina principals walk into teachers' classrooms or ask students about what they are learning, they generally do so with preconceived notions about what is occurs in classrooms and why the classes operate a

certain way. They are trained to use the "Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument" (TPAI) to analyze class size, teacher-student relationships, teaching strategies, student behavior, and the like. Often, conclusions are reached about curriculum content and teacher effectiveness based on short classroom visits, usually three per calendar year as required by state. The author was cognizant about analyzing students' interview responses to questions about how teachers deliver the school's multicultural curriculum in an objective fashion that does not necessarily represent an evaluation of their teacher's pedagogy or the state curriculum. For example, if some students said that they studied too much or not enough multicultural literature in a given semester, the researcher sought more information rather than conclude that the teacher did or did not follow the state curriculum.

The second data analysis strategy the researcher used after code tables were developed was the five content analysis steps process. Marshall and Rossman (1999) outline five content analysis steps that include organizing the data; generating categories, themes, and patterns; testing emergent hypotheses against the data; searching for alternative explanations to the data; and writing report findings. This process is significant because step three requires the researcher to not only identify emergent hypotheses, but to also test them against various data.

The third data analysis strategy the researcher used involves validity or member checks to ensure trustworthiness. After all data were collected, each participant was given a copy of their typed interview transcript in order to check the accuracy of the account. The participants were asked if the descriptions were complete and realistic and if themes and interpretations were fair and representative (Creswell, 2005).

The fourth data analysis strategy the researcher used involved triangulation. Triangulation is a process of verifying information by using multiple sources for evidence (Creswell, 2002; Glesne, 2006; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Participant interview responses were triangulated with other student responses, student records, findings that were reported in the Bruce (2007) study, state and local curriculum documents, teacher lesson plans, and by multiple perspectives that are provided within each of the five dimensions of multicultural education conceptual framework. In addition, theory triangulation involves interpreting a data set through different disciplinary perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Schwandt, 1997). The researcher also interpreted the data through a sociological perspective in order to determine if a sociologist would likely interpret the data in a similar way. Sociology is an appropriate discipline for seeking theory triangulation because, as Schaefer (2004) notes, it is a systematic study of social behavior and human groups that "makes us think deeply about the divide between ourselves and those of different races, classes, and ethnicities" (p. vii).

Limitations

This study has several limitations that are the same as or closely mirror the limitations that Bruce (2007) listed in her qualitative study of North Carolina's first early/middle college high school. These limitations involve location, sample, and methodology:

1. This study will be limited to 12 Black students who graduated from one school site, The Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown, in 2006.
2. The ten student graduates in this study, who also participated in the Bruce (2007) study, represent a small population that may have a reinforcement bias.
3. This study will not include any students who enrolled in the Middle College and subsequently dropped out of school.

4. This study will not compare the Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown with other early or middle college high schools in Guilford County.
5. This study will not compare the Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown with traditional high schools in Guilford County.
6. This study will not compare the Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown with other early or middle college high schools across the state of North Carolina.
7. This study will not conduct any racial comparisons between student participants and other traditional high schools students in Guilford County.
8. This study relies heavily on self-reported student perceptions of five dimensions of multicultural education.
9. The small study sample of 10 students provides limits to drawing significant generalizations from the findings.
10. The researcher assumes that he is a skilled qualitative researcher and that students will provide hones responses to their former principal.

Summary

This study will expand the knowledge base for educational researchers and practitioners relative to the efficacy of new middle and early college high schools in North Carolina. A growing body of literature addresses the achievement gaps between White students and students of color but few studies exist about the efficacy of these new middle and early college high schools in North Carolina in closing achievement gaps. Sellars (2006) and Bruce (2007) are the only scholars to have studied these schools which first opened in 2001 in Guilford County, North Carolina and have now spread across the state (New Schools Project, 2007). In 2006, the U. S. Department of Education allocated $2.87 million

competitive grant (1 of 5 awarded nationally) for a four-year study of Learn and Earn early college high schools. This study will be a collaborative effort between the North Carolina New Schools Project, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the SERVE Center at UNC-Greensboro, and Duke University, and is supported by the Office of the Governor (SERVE, 2006). Unfortunately, the findings from this study will not be available until 2011.

This chapter discussed the purpose of this study which is to analyze the perceptions of students regarding the impact of the early/middle college multicultural curriculum on their academic achievement. It described the qualitative methodology the researcher used to describe the degree to which the schools' design and curriculum provided or do not provide new ways to meet the academic and affective needs of students by affirming their race, gender, class, and cultural differences. It also discussed qualitative research strategies the researcher employed in order to procure unbiased, rich descriptions from study participants.

Interview Questions

The researcher asked each participant the following questions. The questions are printed in a graphic organizer (see Appendix A) that is aligned by visual presentation and content to Banks' (2001) five dimensions of multicultural education. The questions are also printed in a standard format with student coding information at the top (see Appendix B).

Table 2

Researcher's Proposed Timeline

Task	Date of Projected Completion
Dissertation Proposal to Advisor	April 9, 2007
Dissertation Comments from Advisor	May 8, 2007
Dissertation Proposal Revisions to Advisor	October 12, 2007
Dissertation Proposal to Committee	November 2, 2007
Dissertation Proposal Defense	November 19, 2007
Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board (AA-IRB)	November 27, 2007
IRB Meeting	December 11, 2007
Data Collection/Interviews	January 15, 2008
Data Analysis and Results	January 21, 2008
Last Day to File Application to Graduate	February 8, 2008
Completion of Chapters 4 and 5	February 15, 2008
Dissertation Defense Window	March 15-30, 2008
Submission of Final Doctoral Dissertation Due	April 11, 2008
Doctoral Hooding Ceremony	May 10, 2008
Graduation	May 11, 2008

[i] The author considered two other conceptual frameworks related to multicultural education. They include Sonia Nieto's (1992) "Multicultural Educator Self-Assessment" and Marcela Duran's (2002) "Equitable School Self Review." Banks (2001) "Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education" was chosen because it is lends itself entirely to student interviews whereas the other frameworks require faculty assessments.

[ii] Bruce (2007) used the following major research question in her study of an early/middle college high school in Guilford County, North Carolina: How do students perceive that the North Carolina Guilford Technical Community College Middle College High School (GTCC MCHS) structure impacted their academic achievement and internal motivations for educational success? Because this study will include interviews of the same 12 Black students (who have since graduated from the school), the researcher anticipates that the limitations in this study will be very similar or the same as those listed in the Bruce study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

> *Since the advent of formal education in the United States, both the educational system and that system's every reform have been premised on adults' notions of how education should be conceptualized and practiced. There is something fundamentally amiss about building and rebuilding an entire system without consulting at some point those it ostensibly is designed to serve. Authorizing student perspectives introduces into critical conversations the missing perspectives of those who experience daily the effects of existing educational policies-in-practice.* (Cook-Sather, 2002)

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to identify and describe recent early/middle college graduates' perceptions of how a multicultural curriculum impacted their academic achievement. It is based on goal number two of the North Carolina New Schools Project's Learn and Earn initiative, which requires that early/middle college high schools serve a diverse student body, provide a rigorous and relevant curriculum, and decrease dropouts and increase four year graduation rates. All of the ten participants in this study were potential drop-outs at traditional high schools prior to enrolling at The Early/Middle College High School at GTCC-Jamestown (GTCC-J). Five of the participants were Black males and five were Black females. All of them graduated with a college university prep diploma in May 2006. During their senior year in high school, they were participants in a qualitative study conducted by Bruce (2007) related to resiliency and self-efficacy.

Fairly consistent with the design of the Bruce study, this chapter is organized into four sections. The first section provides a participant's pseudonym, a quote and an academic snapshot. The academic snapshot includes the number of years in attendance at GTCC-J, trend data about attendance, trend data about grade point averages, the number of college courses completed while in high school, postsecondary plans reported when they were seniors in high school, and the number of college credit hours participants earned since graduating from high school in May 2006. This academic snapshot provides updated information about each participant that was first published in the Bruce study.

This second section provides brief summary information about participants, including when and why each left their traditional school to enroll in the early/middle college high school. It also discusses what has happened to the participants since they graduated from high school 18 months ago. The third section provides a personal narrative for each of the ten participants. The narratives are printed in first person format and are aligned with Banks' (2001) five dimensions of multicultural education which include content integration, equity pedagogy, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, and empowering school culture and structure. These narratives provide data regarding participants' views of how a multicultural curriculum impacted their academic achievement.

The fourth and final section of this chapter provides a brief summary of participant data as well as initial and revised codes/themes found by the researcher. The chapter concludes with a summary of academic snapshots for all participants.

Beyonce

Table 3

Beyonce: Academic Snapshot

Pseudonym	Years at GTCC-J	Absences	GPA	# of College Courses in High School	Postsecondary Plans/ # College Hours Completed to Date
Beyonce	2	9th-3 10th-4 11th-19 12th-15	9th-1.87 10th-3.37 11th-2.0 12th-3.0	0	Averett College, VA Sociology/ 0 Hours

Beyonce's Post High School Summary

Beyonce enrolled in the early/middle college high school as junior in order to escape her previous school's negative environment. Her pattern of poor attendance and grade point average of 1.87 in the ninth grade increased during her two years at the early/middle college high school. She noted that the school faculty and environment helped her to persist and to mature academically and socially. Though she did not take any college courses, she aspired to major in sociology and criminology at Averett College in Virginia after graduation. With her guidance counselor's help, she applied to and was accepted at NC A&T State University as a full time student and decided to major in psychology with hopes of become a psychologist and working with troubled youth. However, being a full-time student and working a full-time job proved to be too much of an undertaking. She dropped all 15 credit hours and continues to work a full-time wage job. She has aspirations of returning to the community college in the fall and earning an associate's degree in order to increase her earning potential.

Beyonce's Voice

Content Integration (Dimension #1). In my classes I learned a lot of different things, I interacted with more different people than actually learning about the culture. When I was in high school I had—my best friend was you know from a different race, she was from Cambodia, so that like helped me like learn more about different cultures. In class—in class, my teachers that I had they taught me not to—to ever, like not be around people just for certain people because of like their race or anything like that, and I actually learned a lot about different cultures. They—we—let me see, the teachers that I had they never were, they never picked a side on certain issues, or anything, they were always open to listen—if I had like a rebuttal about something I could always ask them and they would explain to me well this is exactly what happened. It would help me out a lot.

With that issue of class, I learned that it is true that people in the upper class do get treated better than people in lower class. That's just something that I've learned like all my life just not at school, and it's really—it's not right at all, but, you know, politics today, so that—that's pretty much it with that issue.

Equity Pedagogy (Dimension #2). What I know as far as with my history classes—it used to—it could be something that I didn't understand and they would take the one-on-one time—if they couldn't teach me in class then they would after class or something they would try to come back and explain it to me, and that would really help me out if I had a question about anything, so as far as history, my teachers that I had, they really helped me out a lot with understanding something, it was never a problem with not getting the help I needed. I would say in some of my classes I didn't think that I got the attention and the help that I needed. But that may have been—that may have been my problem but I know in some—as

far as my math classes I was—I struggled a lot and I feel that I could have got a lot more help than I did. If—when I—when I was in the middle college I had a full time job, woke up in the morning 5:30 had to be to work and got off and soon as I got off I had to come to school, so in class I could feel tired or something and not get something like the first or second time and it just seemed like that when I asked a question I would just get looked at like okay, you should know this, you know, we went over this plenty of times and that really like, I really struggled, that was the main class that I really struggled with trying to get help. I never had a problem getting help just—if I had a question in class I never had a problem just telling the teacher straight forward that I don't understand this so can we please go back over it. And I really—that really—that effect really helps.

Knowledge Construction Process (Dimension #3). As far as—I will refer to my history classes—some stuff that we learned in like world history that were in the books just didn't make sense, it was like, well, if—it was just about like I know about my different—about my culture, like African culture, it would be things in there that I would be like well, is this really true? And the history—the history teacher that I had she—she came from all different—she would come from everyone's perspective and give like the—well, this is how certain people felt and this is the way it was, and she would like help us like okay, well, if we had a question about something that—it was never like anything that was a dumb question, it always was relevant, it just wasn't in the books that we had, the resources that we had.

I honestly did not feel connected at all, I feel like some of the stuff in the history books just were not accurate—I just didn't think it was right. With the—with the history, I don't think they teach enough about the African culture. It's very—like now that I'm older now I—it's really—it's easier for me—like you know I've been in an African-American

college class versus a regular world history class and the material that we learned in high school really does not like teach about everyone's background, it's like very limited, short, cut, dry, with the African culture and I wish that they would teach more about that culture since you know the Black population is rising and that would help out a lot.

Prejudice Reduction (Dimension #4). As far as racial issues being taught I didn't feel like that was ever a problem at the middle college, so I didn't—we never really like got into it, like there was a certain example where anyone was being racist, so I didn't think we got into it on that end, but with the literature and history part, if we read something that—where it was racism going on in the story or something, we would go back and just talk about it and you know we would get asked have we ever personally experienced it, so that would help—that helps out a lot once we get to the literature part and they explain that part.

Empowering School Culture (Dimension #5). I think for that part, you know students and teachers, they interacted pretty well, it was never a certain teacher that was Caucasian or anything that I couldn't feel like I could ask anything for. That part, as far as the teachers and everything, they—they pretty much are open to all students.

I feel—what—I think at a high school it always—you always have like the—the certain cliques or groups where people you know who've always known each other been together anything like that, but for the most part everybody was always open to, you know, learning new things, having new friends, it didn't matter what culture or anything they came from once they came to school it was just like everyone was just one big family, friends and everything, so it was never a problem on that end.

I could really—I personally could tell a difference from the people who were from the upper class because it were certain things like if we were all having a discussion and it was

certain things that was said, then they would look at someone from a lower class and just like at—I don't want to say with disgust, but sort of like that, like oh, I've never had to experience that, or something like that, and that was the only thing that I feel like that—it doesn't matter what class you come from that everyone should be treated the same way, but I know that's not how it is these days. Let me see, I know it was certain people that went to school that came here and they had a lot more money, you know, their parents were filthy rich, so. Just because the way they—they told, you know, they made it known by telling you. And I know one day I had asked—I said, well, what, I mean, if—does the money make you happy? And someone replied to me and said I mean, yeah, you get anything you want. And I've always been brought up in my household to—that it's not about the money, it's about whether you're happy or not, and so that right there really like made me—learned a lot about people real quick.

The best thing about the school was—I would say the unity, everybody being able to get along, no matter what background they came from. One thing I would recommend to be changed is I would—I would say on the first day of classes that they should have type of program just letting—just making it known that we all come from different backgrounds, and that should never like hinder anyone else from being treated a certain way. I feel like that that should be stopped right there, because I had a couple of problems with you know people from the upper class putting lower class people down, so I just feel like that they just need to make it known that everyone comes from different backgrounds, but we are here for one thing, and that's you know, school and to be united, so.

Brad

Table 4

Brad: Academic Snapshot

Pseudonym	Years at GTCC-J	Absences	GPA	# of College Courses in High School	Postsecondary Plans/ # College Hours Completed to Date
Brad	2	9th-3 10th-4 11th-1 12th-2	9th-3.12 10th-3.25 11th-4.5 12th-4.0	12	Culinary arts-Business Johnson & Wales/ 49 Hours

Brad's Post High School Summary

Brad, who was unhappy with the negative environment of his traditional high school, enrolled at the early/middle college high school during his junior year. His grade point average improved from a 3.12 and 3.25 during his freshman and sophomore years to a 4.5 and 4.0 during his junior and senior years. Brad completed three college courses while in high school and aspired to major in culinary arts at Johnson and Wales University after graduation. Since graduation, Brad has completed a total of 49 credit hours at GTCC-J and is expected to graduate with an associate's degree in culinary arts in May, 2008. After receiving this degree, he has aspirations of earning a bachelor's degree at Johnson and Wales Institute in Charlotte, North Carolina in order to become a chef, and perhaps own his own business one day.

Brad's Voice

Content Integration (Dimension #1). I learned that even though we are different on the outside when it all comes down to it, we're basically the same people, we learn the same—even though we learn differently, we can help each other out and come up with a good solution on how to bond stuff out. I learned like especially in Ms. X's class, I didn't

know a bit of Spanish and Adam, who is you know, Caucasian, you know, he knows it you know good in and out and he helped me, and it didn't matter if I was Black, or Arab, or even White, you know, he still helped me out and treated me you know, as just a person. And everybody's just very friendly here and nobody cares about that stuff. We really didn't learn it formal, but I mean we all came here for the same reason, our schools—our previous schools are not good, so we—you know, we wanted to come to a school where none of that was an issue, that's the reason why we came because that was a issue at our other schools so we wanted to come to school that that wasn't an issue with, and you know when you come to someplace you know that gives you that option you don't really want to you know bring that stuff back up into the environment, so.

I mean, you know, of course, the wealthy kids had like, you know, the nice cars, and stuff really, you know, but when you walk in a classroom everybody's on the same playing field, level ground, they don't learn any differently than you do, or they don't, you know—I don't learn any differently from them, I'm not better than them, they're not better than me, so you know. In U.S. History we learned about you know, the different economic statuses and you know, racism, and all that, but I mean, You know, you learned that, you know, back in, you know, 1800s, you know, slavery, and all you know Cherokee Indians, you know, they were pushed out of their land and stuff, but we've come to a point now in our society where we can you know hopefully you know get past that and build for a better future.

Equity Pedagogy (Dimension #2). I would say they did that by—helped me by—just if I ever had a question I could come to them outside of class and they could help me, or they even asked in class if you had a question, they never made you afraid to ask a question, they were always encouraging you know you to ask a question and never really making feel you

know like you didn't belong, like you were dumb or anything, you know, they were always willing to help, and no matter if—you know, you asked a question, the teacher went over it with all—with everybody in the class, because you never know, somebody might have been afraid and didn't want to ask that question that necessarily needed to know that, and just you know to a certain person's learning style and talk to everybody so you know, everybody would get the benefit of it, so they never singled out anybody, or you know try to isolate anyone.

If I needed help or something I would tell them, we have that kind of relationship where I could come to them, no matter if it were before school or after school, and just, you know, hey, I need help with this, you know, can you help me out? And, you know, they were always willing to you know help, take the time out of their busy schedule and help me with whatever I needed.

Knowledge Construction Process (Dimension #3). I don't think we ever discussed anything about bias, except for like the SAT, in SAT prep. I remember in SAT Prep you know, we had the discussion about being biased because some of the stuff that the SAT asked for certain schools don't teach or don't even get around to teaching and so how is there a way for you know certain students to take the test when they've never been introduced or even, you know, seen that kind of material and stuff like that, so. In our history class me, you know, me being an African-American male, and seeing how in history we went from you know slavery to you know, inventing stuff, you know, that really, you know, made me proud to be African-American because you know I saw—through Ms. X I was able to learn you know a lot of stuff about what we have done as a culture and you know how we put our stamp on America and how we build things, you know, and as far as literature, I would say—

I don't know. I would have to say that Mr. X, that's the only one I had, Mr. X, as a literature teacher. I really didn't like literature, and so I guess it was—it's not because of the way he taught, I guess it was because already I had in my mind that you know, I wasn't going to you know use this literature and I was just going to do it and get it over with. So I never really had time to connect with it I just read what I had to read, answer the questions or did the assignments that were needed and just got on through it. I'm not really a literature person, so—I'm more of a science mathematical type person. I would have like to have read some black books, you know, because I'm all about you know, what's it going to do for me? You know, I always ask the question like, well how is this going to pertain to me, you know, how is this going to benefit me? If it's not going to benefit me, or I can't get anything really out of it that's going to help me, then I just don't want to do it.

Prejudice Reduction (Dimension #4). The only time, you know, that's just the great thing about this place, race was never brought up here, and so it was nothing that we had to deal with. No one—I never in my two years of being here I never saw or you know was witness to any kind of racial discrimination or anything. The only time we ever you know talked about race or you know anything with you know economic you know limitations or whatever was in US History, you know, and that's when we learned about it in reading it, but I never saw it here. We were all just a big family, I guess you know? We all got along. There were no arguments over anything, or no one disliked anyone, you know, from what I saw, everybody got along, you know? They just—I mean there was no—you never saw any kind of you know line of separation between teachers that probably had more than others, they all got along, there was no difference.

Empowering School Culture (Dimension #5). I don't think necessarily the you know, what race, or you know or what ethnicity the teacher is makes a good teacher, I think you know, the teacher as a person makes a good teacher, so I'd rather that the teacher—even if the teacher is let's say you know black, you know, or whatever, and they're not a good teacher at all, I don't want them teaching me, you know, I don't think it's you know your skin color—I don't, just because the teacher is black I get along with that teacher more than a teacher that you know, would be white, you know, that's not the case. If you're a good teacher, and you teach me well, and I can understand, and you can put the material in a way that benefits me, then I'll, you know, I think you're a good teacher, and you know, you shouldn't—shouldn't be based on—because we should have the best teachers here.

The best thing about this school I would have to say would be just the people, you know, because you meet lots of different people, people that you necessarily in a regular high school would never talk to, and you know, and you would think ??? they're weird or something, here you can like talk to them and you know they're not put in a, you know, category or anything, and everybody's just very friendly here and open and helpful, you know, no one's really mean towards one another, that's the one thing I like about this school. They always made you feel welcome, you never felt like you were ever less than yourself or unwelcome, so that's what I really liked about it.

Brittany

Table 5

Brittany: Academic Snapshot

Pseudonym	Years at GTCC-J	Absences	GPA	# of College Courses in High School	Postsecondary Plans/ # College Hours Completed to Date
Brittany	2	9th-73 10th-50 11th-pro 12th-20	9th-1.85 10th-2.0 11th-prom 12th-3.0	0	Social Work UNC-G or NCA&T/ 0 Hours

Brittany's Post High School Summary

Brittany enrolled at the early/middle college high school as a sophomore after repeating her freshman year at her traditional high school. Her grade point average was 1.85 during her first 9th grade year and 2.0 during her second year in the 9th grade. By her senior year at the early/middle college, she had a 3.0 grade point average. Brittany had over 20 absences her senior year but noted that her attendance rate was significantly higher than at her previous traditional high school. Most of her absences during her senior year resulted when she became a teen mom. Brittany completed no college courses in high school and has not completed any college courses since she graduated. Brittany has now has two children and works a full-time job at an assisted living center. She has aspirations of returning to GTCC next fall to complete her certified nursing assistant (CAN) license so that she "can get a good job" in a nursing home.

Brittany's Voice

Content Integration (Dimension #1). Well, I learned a lot because it was different, it was easier to talk to people here and stuff if I ask them about what they do and stuff. We

didn't even talk about that everybody was kind of the same we didn't look at people as being the rich or the poor, everybody was just the same.

Equity Pedagogy (Dimension #2). Well, my teachers—they worked with me and—and helped me, like if I didn't understand something they'll change it around to a way that I could understand it, like you know, break it down so I could understand it and figure it out on my own and stuff. I would—I—I'd tell them and let them know, like if I was having a problem with something, I would you know ask them either after class or during class because they helped me and worked with me.

Knowledge Construction Process (Dimension #3). They—I don't know, it was kind of open, they let us like if we felt like it was coming from somewhere else or we didn't think it was right, we—you know, we could tell them, let them know, but you know it was in the books and stuff, so they just worked with it. Like in current events class, a lot of that stuff, like back in the histories and stuff, it was—we always had issues with somebody always saying they don't think this is right, but we discussed it and got through it.

Prejudice Reduction (Dimension #4). Some of the stuff in class I could understand and relate to like what the people was going through and stuff, back then and stuff, but some of it I just couldn't believe, like I could relate to it. But I didn't feel connected, I really, it wasn't about me, no, it was—we—we talked a little bit about it, but not a whole lot, it was just—it was like here and there we would talk about, you know, we would read a black book or whatever, but some of it I couldn't—I didn't really relate to it because I was like—I couldn't be going through that, that would just be hard.

Empowering School Culture (Dimension #5). You all just—to me, it just seemed like we all got along, because like at my other school, I would never really talk to a white person

or an Asian or anything like that was I felt comfortable just being with the black, but when I came here, it just seemed like everybody was just comfortable with just talking to each other, I guess, it was just comfortable. They all got along all groups. It wasn't—to me, it didn't seem like they see the race or culture or anything like that, everybody was just one person. It wasn't about who had the money and who didn't.

Chris

Table 6

Chris: Academic Snapshot

Pseudonym	Years at GTCC-J	Absences	GPA	# of College Courses in High School	Postsecondary Plans/ # College Hours Completed to Date
Chris	2	9th-8 10th-6 11th-6 12th-14	9th-2.13 10th-1.13 11th-2.9 12th-2.0	0	Fire Protection GTCC/ 0 Hours

Chris' Post High School Summary

Chris enrolled at the early/middle college high school during his junior year due to negative academic and social experiences at his traditional high school. He considered dropping out of school when he fell behind academically. His grade point average dropped from 2.13 during his freshman year to 1.13 during his sophomore year. His grade point average increased to 2.9 during his junior year and 2.0 during his senior year. Chris aspired to enter the fire academy at GTCC and earn an associate's degree after graduation. After graduation, he took a full-time wage job at UPS. He enrolled at GTCC in the fire protection program but missed too many classes because he indicated that he "just wasn't ready to go back to school." Chris has aspirations of returning to GTCC next fall and feels confident that he is mature enough to handle the responsibilities of college and to become a fireman.

Chris's Voice

Content Integration (Dimension #1). We really didn't talk about race and culture too much. Besides Ms. X's class ? Yeah, we learned about all kinds of history and everything. History and black culture was—I'm trying to think back. Yeah, I believe we talked a little about social class too. I just can't remember all this stuff but the school basically that's how it was ??? to me, it was kind of divided up. Social classes, stuff like that. I mean you can tell the difference —the way they carry themselves, toward school. Most of the whole school was alright, it wasn't too much of a problem. But—that's about it.

Equity Pedagogy (Dimension #2). The teachers, they do whatever they have to do to help you out, all the time. They'll let you come in in the morning, early as you—early as they come. Or leave before class or you can stay after school sometimes or they help you do whatever. As long as you get that ??? bring in tutors in class to help you, like Mr. X and Ms.—I can't think of her name, uh, Ms. X. She was helpful a lot. They have a class in the morning before even all that, it's a guided study. That was helpful—that was a little helpful, but the tutor in class, that was the most. They really tell by the grades I was making, and besides I'd tell them what I needed help on and I'd just come in and talk to them in the morning, and ask them just to help me out on my studies. I felt ok with that, but I would rather go to my tutor and do that, Mr. X.

Knowledge Construction Process (Dimension #3). Yes, a lot of stuff in the curriculum is biased. Yeah, I think, but—some teachers would talk about it, but there's just a lot of stuff I don't remember. And everybody didn't agree on that, on all the situations we have talked about all kinds of stuff I wish I could, I just can't remember that. I liked history better than most of the other classes because you learned about what your background was like. But I

never learned enough about, you know, me. We went through some stuff like that we never stayed on that—no, we never talked about that. Not in English class neither. We read about—we'd basically read mostly poems. Colored black people might have read some of the stuff we wrote. Cause basically all we was learning was about old English people, you know. It wasn't no history on Black African-American people. I would have like to talk about that more because it's more about my background not just anybody else's in the class, yeah.

Prejudice Reduction (Dimension #4). We didn't talk about class. No, not at all. Most likely because it's basically an all white school, too, on top of that. But if it was a race issue they'll take you—they'll call you out of class and explain that to you, or get an administrator or have a meeting, call the parent. But they'd never talk about it like that, in class, out in front. No, they wouldn't do that, I know.

Empowering School Culture (Dimension #5). They got along pretty all right, I'd say, besides a couple of teachers, you know, I don't know their names—my teachers are all right, but I know a couple that they weren't all right, you know. An English, and it's another teacher, I don't know what she taught, I don't even know her name, she wasn't one of my teachers. X, yeah, he was—I don't know, he wasn't too all right. Because he'd basically give a White kid more of a chance before he give a Black kid because if the White kid's going to talk he's going at least to tell him to be quiet, the Black kid talk he's going to get on him and want to put him out. And that's just how it was. I knew just getting out of that class was finishing.

The teachers, they got along pretty alright, but there was some talk about, you know, different teachers is going to have different things. Talk about different people. I know there's a couple of times, I just can't remember. Different income groups, students and

teachers? I'd say that's about—man, they was about the same, really. Yeah, I forgot, we had certain cliques, kids growing up probably knowing each other from school, and we had certain cliques from having money, and we had certain cliques for being young. Some grouping, maybe, but it really wasn't too much of a big difference who had money. It was, but they didn't show it too much. They might have, but they didn't show it too much.

Ella

Table 7

Ella: Academic Snapshot

Pseudonym	Years at GTCC-J	Absences	GPA	# of College Courses in High School	Postsecondary Plans/ # College Hours Completed to Date
Ella	2.5	9th-20 10th-0 11th-16 12th-9	9th-2.87 10th-3.0 11th-2.8 12th-3.0	5	Radiology & MSW Forsyth Tech/ 15 Hours

Ella's Post High School Summary

Ella enrolled in the early/middle college high school due to negative experiences at her traditional high school. She also experienced difficulty caring for her newborn child and working a third shift job. Her grade point average increased from 2.8 during her freshman year to 3.0 during her senior year. Ella completed four college courses while in high school and aspired to complete an associate degree in radiology after graduation and then earn a master's degree in social work. After graduation, she took some time to "digest life" and to find out what she really wanted to do, though she says she always knew she would return to college at some point. Since that time, she has decided that she is interested in studying pre-law with the goal of one day representing juveniles. Ella has completed fifteen hours toward an associate's degree in criminal justice.

Ella's Voice

Content Integration (Dimension #1). More so when I—I think—when the whole initial thing like when I first came here wasn't—when I graduated I was very cliquey, but when I first got here it was very—like everybody had a reason to be here, everybody was uniquely different, but it really didn't matter, I mean it's still not as judgmental as regular high school. Not at all. You still have a kind of a understanding of one another, unlike regular high school where everybody's so indifferent with themselves they don't know how to act with each other, so. I mean it's—it's one of those things where it's kind of like waiting tables, it builds your character in some ways. Because you learn how to deal with other people. I'm good at adapting to my surroundings, but as far as—as a whole, yeah, because—I mean, I was ready to get out of that immature stage because I was just sick of it, so coming here and being—not treated as an adult, but given responsibility of an adult, that—it's not like you have to do this, this, this, it was kind of like an indirect thing, that you knew—you knew what to do, so. I don't know, I can't—I can't really say.

I think instead of teaching about different cultures it was more so it was a tolerance between the teachers of how you could push it. Certain things, you know, you couldn't say, but even at times like—it wasn't like if you did go out the way it wasn't like you got reprimanded for it. It's more so, why did you say that, understand—what's the problem? So, yeah, I think it's—as far as the classes go, the way the situations were handled and how the curriculum was taught, yeah, it was a whole lot better here than anywhere else.

I mean here, it like really didn't matter about social classes. And I think that was another thing that like—I mean you could wear the same clothes every—you know, you know, it wasn't—it really didn't matter, it didn't matter if you rode the bus to school or if

you had a car, whatever, I mean, it really wasn't one of those things that was looked upon here because you're on—I mean a community college campus, it might be a little different on a university, I think, but a community college is a little bit different. So I know that the income levels here were never addressed.

Ella's Voice-Equity Pedagogy (Dimension #2). I think—I had several teachers—I loved all my teachers, individually, and I think—but there's difference between another person and how they acted. I mean something like math, Ms. X out how you ticked, and she taught everybody on a whole, as a class, but if she seen you were falling behind or something she would always work with you. Now like when I was on homebound in Algebra II, there was no way. I mean she really took the time, and like—it was all up to you. If you didn't want to do it, you didn't do it. But at the same time, she wasn't going to let you fail, just because you want to be an idiot and be—you know? I'd say 75% of them modified for me. And, I mean there's only maybe a couple of teachers that are just—that might happen, say 5% of the time, with them, those particular ones.

I really didn't until I had problems with teachers meeting my needs. That's why I was like I was not getting something, or—I mean it's not like I was like this—this is how I am, which much of the time if they didn't understand me I'm like look, this is how I tick and how I tock. I try to do that and it just didn't work. I'm not trying to be funny, but I think a lot of the stiffness came from us being the model school and all that because like it really—it used to be like really personal thing with each student, yeah. And now it seems like it's just one of those like—I don't know, I feel like I don't—I don't want it to be like the regular high schools are with test scores, that's all they worry about, you know.

Ella's Voice-Knowledge Construction Process (Dimension #3). I don't know, I think it's more of a debatable issue like with Ms. X had stuff we had talked about was—wasn't always what she thought. She got a—she got a pretty—I don't know, well-rounded opinion from everybody. I definitely think people were comfortable with their opinions and definitely being respectful. I think more so than anywhere else. People that I would never expect to speak up in class, you know, interact. I mean we really have no choice, though. I think if there was a comfort zone for everybody to talk about it, yeah, but I don't think there is. But sometimes I feel like people feel like they have to hold themselves back, as far as what they speak. Because like even Ms. X used to be a lot more opinionated about how she felt and her compassion about things, it seems like she's kind of toned that down a little bit, I don't know.

It depended on the teacher whether I felt connected or not. I really liked Ms. X . I mean a lot of people didn't like her because of her—this is how it is, she doesn't give you an inch, you know what I'm saying, you give me an inch, and I might—you know, I'll award you for doing what you do, I mean she's a really, really good teacher as far as what—understanding and like doing different things to help you understand like it wasn't the same thing every day and it wasn't like so much of a different thing that you dreaded it every day like Mr. X's class. God I hated going to class.

I don't think being connected on race and gender has anything to do with here. But I mean I kind of see why you're asking that question because in normal high schools it—I think it has a lot to do with—I mean, I even do the same thing, I stereotype a lot. And knuckleheads, especially nowadays, you don't want to learn, you don't want to learn, you know. So I can understand where you might be indifferent to want to teach somebody, but everybody has a place.

Prejudice Reduction (Dimension #4). The teacher didn't discuss race. I don't know why. I don't think it was something that needed to be discussed. It really was never a problem, that I remember. I mean it was at Northeast, I mean I could tell you a book about that, but here it's not like we ever like racial justice or anything. I think that it became a separation type thing, like no one ever got left out of the wing as far as like falling through the cracks and I just—I was thinking that a lot like before I graduated like these kids they ??? and I just it feels like they separated, it was like high school because they were separated themselves. And I know that like before we never had—I mean, it's not like we never had, but like people not getting along like and separating themselves as far as this group and that group and who hangs out with—it was never like that. But I don't see the racial diversity. Well, when I left, it wasn't, to me. I mean it probably was, but it just didn't seem like it.

Empowering School Culture (Dimension #5). I think especially for the teachers, especially the ones that I know, that I've seen, have really evolved as teachers and people, because of the unique crowd we have and how personal we get with them. I think—I don't know, it's just being that we know everything and know everybody's life story just about—I think—I mean in a high school you'd be so judgmental, even—even you come in with your own judgments and you ???, but here you just—like once you put yourself in those shoes you kind of empathize and understand what people are going through so I think that changed a lot as far as that goes.

Fine, I guess different cultural groups- we didn't really have any like interact. But we all knew each other, but it was like surface, very surface. I hated it. I guess it's because I knew what it was before. Yeah, I think it's more so speak of a—not even a—a no tolerance type thing, like we're here for a reason, and I don't understand why you have to go even

further to try to separate yourself and make it—make what you left to come over here, you know, I just don't.

I think—like with Ms X. I know she didn't fit in with the teachers. But I mean as far as, well she was the only Black teacher here. I mean, well she wasn't like what I would call a stereotypical Black teacher. Or even a Black woman, because I mean she talked like she was like she—her vocabulary was White, the way she dressed was White, I mean not that she thinks she's White, but you know what I mean, beyond the norms of pushing White and Black south, you know, she—she—I mean, it wasn't—and it wasn't anything funny, or misrepresented, it was just how she was. And I don't think—I know the students didn't particularly accept it, because I don't know if it had anything to do with her being Black, I think they thought that she was a hypocrite, and that she was fake. Because of the way she acted and that she was so—this is how it is, like I mean I don't know, I think it. She would not have been as respected if she was White. She would have got ran over. If she was White she would definitely—no one would have listened to her. I think her being Black is the—what made her authoritative.

John

Table 8

John: Academic Snapshot

Pseudonym	Years at GTCC-J	Absences	GPA	# of College Courses in High School	Postsecondary Plans/ # College Hours Completed to Date
John	3	9^{th}-7 10^{th}-10 11^{th}-3 12^{th}-2	9^{th}-2.87 10^{th}-3.1 11^{th}-3.7 12^{th}-3.8	25	Heavy Equipment Technology-GTCC/ 76 hours

John's Post High School Summary

John enrolled in the early/middle college high school at the beginning of his sophomore year to escape racial problems and a negative traditional school environment. Unlike most of the students in this study, his parents were instrumental in encouraging him to enroll in the school. His traditional school grade point average, which was higher than most students, increased from 2.8 in his freshman year to 3.1, 3.7, and 3.8 during his sophomore, junior and senior years at the early/middle college. John completed nine college courses toward an associate degree in heavy equipment technology. He was featured in Newsweek Magazine as an ambassador for the Learn and Earn early and middle college program. Since graduating from high school, John has taken a job at an international truck company. He obtained his associate's degree in December, 2007. He has aspirations of enrolling at North Carolina A&T State University to earn a degree in business management.

John's Voice

Content Integration (Dimension #1). I guess that everybody learns at different paces not based on race or anything else but just that everybody's different. And—but, you know, you don't have to hate each other because you're black or you're white or you're a Hispanic, so it really wasn't stressed the race you were, just you know, just as long as you got the material and everybody moved toward a common goal. Even though there were some wealthy people who are I guess sons or daughters of wealthy people, they—you could never, really tell, you know, there were some people that—that were you know, I guess, not flaunting it, but you know, they knew they were rich, and they didn't mind you knowing, but some people were really down to earth, I remember having a conversation, I forgot his name, but I know his first name was X, but he came up to me talked to me every day and it really

was nice. He was a white guy, and he was pretty rich. I found that out later on through other people, but I would never know it. You know, some people just wanted you to see their money, there was very few. But I could remember one guy, but pretty much everybody else was right on target, you know, they—they didn't flaunt anything. He probably did that because low self esteem or something, you know, a lot of people they don't have a lot of time to spend with their family or something, so it was probably a little bit of that. But I think he got kicked out. That was the first year I was here.

Equity Pedagogy (Dimension #2). My teachers really changed their teaching a lot. I know—yeah, in my math class, I'm not the best in math, so I had to really slow down and think about it, read the book, and Ms. X really helped me towards that because she, you know, didn't mind slowing down and explaining what was going on. She made it—learning fun, math. She had different activities that we did, she made us go to the board and do problems, it was more interactive- than sitting back and doing problems on a worksheet. I think I just had Ms. X for a math teacher.

If I needed extra help with my work I just told them, I told them. And sometimes they saw it in me, and you know asked if they need to speed up, slow down, you know, or if the pace is going right, so. All of them, they were really good.

Knowledge Construction Process (Dimension #3). I'm trying to think how they discussed bias. I know that in different classes, you know, different school classes, they would explain you know different aspects of history. I know Ms. X, she's Spanish, and she taught a lot about their culture, and you know I learned a lot about different cultures and stuff like that, so pretty much the textbooks I don't think it was so much biased because the teachers explained it, you know, they didn't go, you know, exactly by the book, you know,

they went a lot on their knowledge and the knowledge, you know, is pretty much what I know.

I felt connected. A couple of times on/ I think Ms. X was one. And she—she showed videos and stuff and made us read books, which wasn't bad, because you know, the book reading actually got you involved in the storyline. And also a couple of the writing assignments, the reading assignments and I also had Mr. X, which is—I loved his class. That's probably one class that sticks out in my mind. He was just funny. I like his personality, yeah. Oh yeah, for example in Ms. X's class we read—what is it called—Things Fall Apart, yeah, and that was about an African tribe, so you know, a little connection there, and—yeah.

Prejudice Reduction (Dimension #4). Well, our teachers—I didn't see a very biased teaching us down or anything, you know, they didn't act like one race was better than the other, and it—I guess it really wasn't discussed to a point where you know everybody was sitting there bored, because, you know, nobody wants to talk about that issue, but everybody—I felt that it was pretty spread about—you know, nobody felt that they were put down because they were black or they were white or Hispanic or Asian or anything else. I didn't see a real big bias at all.

Empowering School Culture (Dimension #5). They (teachers) would all stand up during breaks stand at the little circle and talk to each other, so—I mean, I didn't—I didn't notice anything. Same thing, I really didn't notice a big difference with cultural groups. I really didn't notice a difference here with income groups. The best thing about this school—I really do think it was the—probably the teachers. The teachers really had a big impact because when you come from a regular high school, it's not as much stressed on learning as

it is different—different clothing styles, different ethnic groups, stuff like that, so teachers really made it about learning and it was actually fun to learn, so I think that was the biggest good part about the school.

It's just different than regular school because they—they actually treat you like a person and plus you know you can earn college credits, and you know, that goes toward your transcript, too, so. I left (X High School) because of racial problems. Yeah, and I transferred from X to Y and I think that was my freshman year, and it was—yeah, split it in half. There was a lot of—a lot of tension between, you know, between the races at X, and I mean particularly one—one night we were being harassed by a group of students who I guess didn't like my dad and they said they were going to come hang him or something like that, and I just didn't feel safe in that environment. It—it was pretty much that way. And it was pretty much there was a kind of the favoritism you don't find here.

Michael

Table 9

Michael: Academic Snapshot

Pseudonym	Years at GTCC-J	Absences	GPA	# of College Courses in High School	Postsecondary Plans/ # College Hours Completed to Date
Michael	2	9^{th}-6 10^{th}-2 11^{th}-1 12^{th}-3	9^{th}-2.25 10^{th}-2.25 11^{th}-3.9 12^{th}-4.2	7	Computer Science-GTCC/ 22 hours

Michael's Post High School Summary

Michael enrolled in the early/middle college high school because of an ad in the newspaper and encouragement from his guidance counselor and family. Although Michael had good attendance at his traditional high school, he was not connected to any co-curricular

or extra-curricular activities. His grade point average increased from 2.2 and 2.2 during his freshman and sophomore years at his traditional school to 3.9 and 4.2 during his junior and senior years at the early/middle college. He completed one college course and aspired to complete an associate degree in computer science after graduation.

Michael's Voice

Content Integration (Dimension #1). What did I learn about different races? They're all different, you know, but we all learn to get along with each other. I mean I guess because we're all there for the same reason, so we all got together, I mean there's no reason for us to you know do the same thing we were doing at the old schools, so. No, I guess we really, I didn't learn a lot about race and cultures-we kind of like learned just by talking to each other, not really learning, so. What I did learn is that they're just like us we're all there to do the same thing, to get our degrees, and then our career. I kind of knew them about social groups myself, because the teachers didn't really teach us about the social groups, I kind of already knew, so.

Equity Pedagogy (Dimension #2). Well actually, my teachers took time, you know we had the study hall at the beginning of the—when school started, before school started you know they'd take extra time to get this stuff down. We never had a problem, you know helping us out outside of class. I'd just tell them right after class ended if I had a problem with something I would bring it to her or his attention and they would try to fix it. My teacher knew how I learned. All I had to do was bring it to their attention. I mean, they were glad to help me out. Every last teacher I had.

Knowledge Construction Process (Dimension #3). Yeah, we learned something about bias in—what class was that?-Humanities. And you know they were talking about good and

evil and all that kind of stuff and that was kind of biased. Like, you know, she—well actually, we—we were trying—she was trying to get us to open our mind up to different things like she would ask us you know how we know some kind of certain thing was evil, you know she was like giving a definition of what evil is, and how would we know if it is evil. So we would—she would give us examples of stuff like that and she would ask us if it was evil or not. And we'd all have different opinions, so. There was no difference in black and white. They kind of just—you know, they expressed their feelings, you know, they all told what they felt, nobody was holding back, they—yeah, we were you know together on that.

I really didn't feel a personal connection to the curriculum. It was just something interesting to learn. We didn't really learn too much about black history. I would be interesting in knowing more about it, but I don't want it to be like, you know, set on that one particular group. You know, because there are white people there, Hispanics and stuff. I mean I think all races should be covered, you know, like history, you know, I mean the World War stuff was like, you know, it's British people and stuff like that, Germans. I mean so we covered that, that's out of, you know, history. We did cover blacks during the American Revolution. Yeah, we did, we did cover that. I mean in English we were reading up on Shakespeare, you know, stuff like that. That was interesting, but I didn't really feel a connection with that, either, Shakespeare. We had like a mock trial and I felt pretty connected to that.

Prejudice Reduction (Dimension #4). I mean we were just basically taught to respect one another. I wasn't really caught up on race, I don't think anybody else was either. The year I was here as a senior. I really don't remember too much of my eleventh grade year.

Well, actually we didn't really learn anything about low—you know, high class. No, not really. Not really, to my knowledge, but you know they let us wear anything we wanted, so it wasn't like we, you know, were limited to something.

Empowering School Culture (Dimension #5). We all got along—you talking about the students and the teachers? Oh, yeah, everybody—it was just one big family, we all—I basically knew everybody my twelfth grade year. We didn't have any problems—well, we had problems with other students, but we got those resolved, so. Everybody got along pretty well, black and white, you know, Hispanic, we all got along. Actually, at first it was kind of you know, shaky. Like, you know, we didn't know each other, you know people were like you know, who is that, I mean just typical high school stuff, you know when you're just getting into a new school. After all that we got along pretty well. They would see that, you know, like you would see, maybe like—maybe a Mexican or you know, a Caucasian, a Black, you know students talking to each other, talking about what happened to them last week, or something, you know, just typical stuff. I mean you probably wouldn't see that in a regular high school, but over here it's bound to happen. The students, they got along pretty well. It wasn't really too many cliques you know, maybe we had maybe one or two friends that hung out with each other, but as far as cliques it wasn't—it wasn't even cliques. See, I came from (X High School). There, you know the Hispanics, you know, they would be sitting down in hallways, you know, then we have the Caucasians you know they'll just be sitting in the hallways interacting with each other, you know, I guess they all just got together, and then you'd have your African-Americans in one spot, you know.

I mean they didn't really notice any differences from teachers—didn't nobody really like say anything about it. So I guess it wasn't really that big of a deal. I think because of the

environment. You know? I mean it's more freedom, you get to do what you want, you know, it's your choice, you know, where in a regular high school you have to you know, be in class what, five minutes, you know you have to—whenever you change classes you've got five minutes between classes, you know, you're actually in a college environment where it's more mature people and—I mean, some people can't—you know, they can't adapt like that—like that early, like ninth grade, like a couple of them were kind of—you know, that weren't ready, you know what I'm saying, so. Besides that I think it's the environment's what helped everything, made it a better school.

Royce

Table 10

Royce: Academic Snapshot

Pseudonym	Years at GTCC-J	Absences	GPA	# of College Courses in High School	Postsecondary Plans/ # College Hours Completed to Date
Royce	1	9th-5 10th-3 11th-0 12th-6	9th-2.25 10th-2.1 11th-2.3 12th-2.4	0	Automotive Technology-GTCC/ 0 Hours

Royce's Post High School Summary

Royce enrolled in the early/middle college high school at the beginning of his senior year. His mother encouraged him to pursue the opportunity to earn free college credit in auto technology. His grade point average increased from 2.25 during his freshman year and 2.1 during his sophomore year to 2.3 and 2.4 during his junior and senior years. Royce completed no college course in high school but aspired to complete an associate degree in auto technology after graduation. Since graduating, Royce took two full-time jobs at an auto parts store and a carwash. He also enrolled in three non-credit bearing developmental

education courses in reading and math. Royce has aspirations of returning to GTCC to get an associate's degree in some automotive area but is not sure if this is the best choice for his future.

Royce's Voice

Content Integration (Dimension #1). I learned a lot, you know, I learned a lot how to interact with other people of other backgrounds that I might not have had in my old high school, you know, saw the difference in how they acted and how—the difference in between the two, you know, compare some things, some things good, some things bad on both sides. Like—you know, just—just, just all around like cultural differences I learned how to—how to introduce myself to people as in—as in just one high school one way, which is a lot of times, you know, you're not with them, you're not with them, or whatever, you know, you're not with the group, you're in the loner group.

I learned a lot about social classes. Like, I learned that everybody didn't really come up the same way, people just different- different parents and different situation. I didn't really learn that in class, I learned that just by being in the hallway at GTCC, you know, people who were raised differently, different reactions. I didn't really learn that at my old high school either, because there was just like—there was just, you know what I'm saying, you could just be one—you could just be like a cool dude, you could be the angry dude, you could be the happy dude, you know, the guy that always tells jokes, you could play those characters. I didn't learn a lot about differences from my teachers. I learned—I learned a lot of it informally, you know, just by looking and studying people and their habits.

Royce's Voice-Equity Pedagogy (Dimension #2). My teachers didn't really have to modify their teaching at all, it's like I already knew how to catch on with it a lot of times,

because you know as the year progressed I probably picked it up, how they talked. I mean I'd say I'm more of a—I'm not hardheaded, I don't feel it to believe it, but I like to see things in physical. To get help I' just raised my hand and asked. Maybe now and then, like sometimes, sometimes I raise my hand up and ask and then every now and then if I didn't get something I hope that—hope that they come back to it later on. They might have well you can come to my office.

Knowledge Construction Process (Dimension #3). I mean every now and then, yeah, my teachers did discuss a little bit of bias. Like they would discuss differences in the textbook between you know, probably what it really was. Like, you know, in the textbook they speak of a lot of European—like in history they speak of a lot of European things and how things were back in Europe and just American and Caucasian culture. I don't really got that too many big of examples of bias because it—I mean I knew this when I came from my old high school how it was out of the textbook and how it was for real, so. I didn't really learn it in high school, it's more of how I was raised up.

I didn't really feel too connected on that- you know, the material in class. Yeah, there was really no connection. Because one was—one was mostly—I know in my literature class they was mostly talking about like the Romans and poems and my history class was more a overall view of everything. Probably if the two teachers got together and discussed what they was both going to do and how they was going to come about everything and how they wanted to teach the students they could have made it better. I didn't read a lot about myself, no. I probably read probably one story that close to even being like anything close to African-American. I just think, you know, I just viewed it, when I was doing it, I just viewed it as part of high school. You know, something I had to do in order to you know, get through.

Royce's Voice-Prejudice Reduction (Dimension #4). They were not really that included with race and class because you know that subject is a really touchy subject to some people, it's something you can't even bring that up around because it is just like, you know, you got the people that don't want to be you and you got the people that want to be just like you and then you have the people in the middle, you know what I'm saying? You got the people, you know, that want—that wish—that they want to be like you, and you got the people that don't want to be like you. And this is with I think every race, like you know I know—I know black people that act White or they act like they're from a suburban area that they don't really know, they look just like somebody from a other area, so, yeah.

Royce's Voice-Empowering School Culture (Dimension #5). At here they interacted well, I think, yeah, they interacted well. It wasn't no really like it wasn't no like no big miscommunication or anything like that, it was just like a even flow, you know, everything just all the kids were right. I personally think teachers and administration interacted well with one another. As far a income groups? I don't really know, because I didn't really know anybody's income at the school. It—usually it's not that hard, except you know here it was harder to know who was a part of what group because you know, you didn't really have people coming in the school and everything fresh and you know t-shirt they just bought with the tag still on it, you know you knew they had it.

Star

Table 11

Star: Academic Snapshot

Pseudonym	Years at GTCC-J	Absences	GPA	# of College Courses in High School	Postsecondary Plans/ # College Hours Completed to Date
Star	2	9th-10 10th-63 11th-19 12th-23	9th-1.4 10th-0.5 11th-3.25 12th-3.2	0	Cosmetology & Bus. Admin-GTCC/ 0 Hours

Star's Post High School Summary

Star enrolled in the early/middle college high school at the beginning of her junior after learning about the school from a local radio advertisement. She dropped out of her traditional high school and reported being depressed after the birth of her child. Her grades point average increased from 1.4 and 0.5 in her freshman and sophomore years to 3.25 and 3.2 during her junior and senior years. Star did not complete any college courses. She aspired to complete an associate degree in cosmetology and business after graduation. Since graduating, had her second child and completed four non credit bearing development education courses. She enrolled in four regular college course in the fall of 2007 but dropped them before the end of the semester. Star has aspirations of completing two years of college transfer courses and then enrolling at a four year institution somewhere in North Carolina (other than NC A&T) to study biotechnology, a subject that inspired her in high school.

Star's Voice

Content Integration (Dimension #1). Well I learned everybody is equal, we're all here for the same reason and there's no—in middle college there's no boundaries of race, age, color, and you know, anything like that for someone to feel uncomfortable. I guess I learned

it in class and just in being here in general. The people that are around me, my teachers, my peers. There wasn't too much of that, you know, lower class, middle class, poor. No one really, you know pinpointed out what class of socialness we were in, but—no, not really.

Equity Pedagogy (Dimension #2). There were always one-on-one hands-on, you didn't have like a large classroom where a lot of people didn't learn things, it was always if you didn't know something the teacher would try to help you to figure it out. If you wanted help- ask them, ask them questions. In class, you know I was talking to them in class! They always took it well, I mean they helped me out. They—they did good—they did a good job.

Knowledge Construction Process (Dimension #3). Yeah, we're learning about that right now. In my (college) reading class. Bias is just basically it's—you're just being one-sided, you're not listening to the opposing view. The teachers—it wasn't really a bias issue of learning, you know, everyone was on the same page at the same pace, and there was no one jumping ahead, there was no one lagging behind. A couple of times with Ms. X I have, but I can't think of any specific examples. Not offhand.

Prejudice Reduction (Dimension #4). I felt that I knew what was—I could relate to what was being taught, and I learned what was taught—in a—how shall I say—well, usually we did kind of groups vocabulary kind of thing, so that really helped me out because I use—I still use my vocabulary to this day. But like I said before it wasn't really a racial issue, you know, being Black or White or Asian and Mexican, anything like that, so I mean, like I said everybody was on the same pace, everybody did everything that they were supposed to do. That's why we got out of here on time!

Empowering School Culture (Dimension #5). Well usually, we would discuss things at assembly first, and we'd talk about things in the assembly, than after that maybe the next

day the teacher would kind of you know—give more light to what you were saying, so everybody could understand. I wouldn't say we talked about racial, but I was—I remember the smoking issue, about going fifty feet from the building to smoke a cigarette, so you wouldn't have cigarette butts all in front of the door. That's one specific I remember. Everybody here is like a family, you know? There's not really—everybody eats lunch together, everybody does their little work time together, and their meetings and all that together, so I—I'd say it's a big family.

Some teachers talked about cultural groups. Yeah, like I'd say Ms. X is kind of like a prime example in her Spanish class, she taught us her culture, and how she does things in her culture and her way of life, and I took that into consideration. It was a good thing. Yeah, we would be missing a little piece of the puzzle it she hadn't have done that.

I kind of think it is diverse, a little, I mean, but no, not really, because everyone is doing their job, and if they weren't, that would be a different story. I think we're all here for a reason and students are here to learn and teachers are here to teach.

Victoria

Table 12

Victoria: Academic Snapshot

Pseudonym	Years at GTCC-J	Absences	GPA	# of College Courses in High School	Postsecondary Plans/ # College Hours Completed to Date
Victoria	2	9^{th}-8 10^{th}-5 11^{th}-1 12^{th}-4	9^{th}-1.83 10^{th}-1.66 11^{th}-1.5 12^{th}-2.71	1	Pediatric Nursing NCCU or Duke/ 3 Hours

Victoria's Post High School Summary

Victoria enrolled in the early/middle college high school at the beginning of her junior due to advice from her guidance counselor and dissatisfaction with her traditional high school. She particularly disliked the two math classes that she was scheduled for during the same semester. Her grade point average was 1.83 and 1.66 during her freshman and sophomore years. Although her grade point average remained low at 1.5 during her junior year, Victoria improved it to a 2.71 during her senior year. She completed no college courses and aspired to attend a four year college and complete a degree in pediatric nursing after graduation. Since graduating from high school, Victoria completed six non-credit bearing developmental education classes at GTCC-J. In the fall of 2007, she enrolled in three regular college classes with a goal of matriculating into the nursing program at the college. Unfortunately, she failed these courses. She has since begun a new job at a local hospital. Victoria has aspirations of getting a better paying job at the hospital and to return to GTCC to complete an associate's degree in some health related field.

Victoria's Voice

Content Integration (Dimension #1). Well, of course I had Spanish, so I had to learn a different language and I learned a lot in that class because the teacher, you know she was of a different race, so it was a little bit better for me. And I guess I learned a new language and new things about different people, you know. We talked about different races here and there. I'd say—I mean. Oh, yeah, we talked about social classes like during our study, during the curriculum, we talked about it, it was a part of the curriculum. I believe it was history.

Victoria's Voice-Equity Pedagogy (Dimension #2). My teachers met my learning style by working with me every day and if I ever had a problem, I could always go to them,

personally, or just in general, just out in public I could go to them, but usually I went in private you know, to talk to them if I really had a problem. But usually all the teachers there, they came up to you and they actually asked you what you needed, did you need any help with this, did you need any help with that, and if you needed some help, you know, you just ask them and they'd be there for you. Well, pretty much after class, when everybody was leaving, you know, I'd usually go up you know and have a personal conversation with them and they connect back with me and tell me what, you know, what's this and what's that, and if I ever had—needed something to be explained they'd explain it.

Knowledge Construction Process (Dimension #3). I don't believe that it was ever brought up in the way to point it towards a certain race. Not exactly like that, like any racial comments, or anything like that, it was never pointed to a person, you know, a certain group of people, it was always one group, you know, we were always talked to as one group, you know. We would talk about different bias groups, but not as, you know, picked out one—one group and just talk about them. It's always everybody, you know what I'm saying?

Well, I like history and I like literature. I don't like to read, but connected to that I think I got everything pretty much down pat with that because history, you know it always comes from your background, you know, what everybody went through in life, what—you know, where they come from today, from back in the day, so it's like everybody can connect with that because you know, you've come from that, that's where you came from, so. But I know the curriculum wasn't about me. Like I said before, it was never placed out like—it wasn't pointed out as a certain race, so everything we talked about was about everybody we talked about, any kind of race, so it's like it was never pointed out towards me. I didn't feel that way.

Prejudice Reduction (Dimension #4). Yeah, we did discuss class issues. We had—we talked about that, about like upper class, middle class, lower class, income, the lower class, you know, that's you know, a little poor group. You know, that's where you don't really make that much income, pretty much of the homeless group, you know. The middle class which is in between where you make enough income to get by, you see what I'm saying? And then the upper class, that's the wealthy class is where you know, you're rich, you don't have to really worry about anything and people—you get a lot of popularity in that.

Empowering School Culture (Dimension #5). Everybody interacted with each other very well, yeah. It doesn't matter the—it didn't even matter the race, everybody got along, everybody just, you know, ??? that was it. Well, of course at school you're always going to have a certain group that is going to be, you know, different from everybody else, you know? People wear different things, people dress a certain way, and people you know talk a certain way to people. And of course you're going to have people in school that are always going to hate, you know. So there is going to be a confrontation between one group to the other. Now we did have that.

Well, okay let's say—I'm going to give you an example. Say I'm a group of popularity, you know. Me and my girls or whoever are a group of popularity, or you know, we get—we get treated based off of how we look, how we dress, how we talk, how we walk, you know, but it's in a good way. Another group, a certain group that doesn't—you know, doesn't even hang with us, you know, we never even talk to them like that. You know they act and dress a certain way, pretty much the same way we do, you know? Just in a different way. It doesn't—it doesn't matter who it is, you know. And I guess it just depends how people act, like I said. But the group that doesn't—like us, we could be, you know, and

fancy, but we hating on the other group, because—or the other group might be hating on us because we're so popular, you know? But we hating on them because they're hating on us, you see what I'm saying? So there's a confrontation there, every time you see them they give you a look and every time we see them we give them a look. And it's like—we're sitting—you might say something and it might end out to a fight or a confrontation. It could be female or male, you know, any way, I'm just giving an example, so. That happens a lot in school these days, confrontation between certain groups, popularity.

Well, students with income—I don't know, we—you know, people—we never, we never talked about it, you know? It wasn't a big thing, even with teachers, it wasn't a big thing, no one talked about their income. If it was, it was just—I guess a conversation between two people and someone overheard it and that was it, nothing really about income that—that's not a problem.

To tell you the truth, it was a little bit of everything in the—in the faculty, so it's nothing wrong with that. I think it should be like that, where you have a different race of every teacher, you know what I'm saying? A little bit of everything, and that what you guys got. To me it doesn't matter, to tell you the truth. I think you should accept people of other races, you know, not make it just this one color and that other color, make it of all races, it doesn't matter, you know, because people you know are different and everybody of course is not the same. Everybody is different, so you should give everybody a chance, you know. Not everybody, of course, but you know, give at least another—someone a chance.

In the next section, four themes are discussed relative to participants' perceptions of the impact of a multicultural curriculum upon their student achievement, through the lens of Banks (2001) five dimensions of multicultural education. The five dimensions include

content integration, equity pedagogy, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, and empowering school culture and school structure.

Emergent Themes

After the initial review of transcripts of participant interviews, the researcher developed several initial themes/codes (see Appendix G). However, after further review and investigation, the researcher identified four primary themes (see Appendix H). These themes are interwoven across the five dimensions of multicultural education that include content integration, equity pedagogy, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, and empowering school culture. The four themes involve race/neutral curriculum, positive relationships and colorblind equality, learning styles influence equity pedagogy, and the need for increased content and staff diversity.

Emergent Theme 1: Race/Class Neutral Curriculum

All study participants provided evidence that suggests that the school's multicultural curriculum was weak in dimension #1 (content integration) and dimension #3 (knowledge construction process). Relative to content integration, several students cited specific examples of a social studies teacher, an English teacher, and a Spanish teacher integrating material about different racial groups or cultures that was not found in the textbook. Notwithstanding these three teacher examples, participants said that the standard curriculum taught by teachers generally did not include information about different racial groups and cultures. In addition, teachers did not discuss issues of bias in the curriculum, with the exception of the wording and make-up of SAT tests.

Emergent Theme 2: Positive Relationships and Colorblind Equality

Study participants viewed dimensions #4 (prejudice reduction) and #5 (empowering school culture and structure) as the weakest dimensions in terms of the school curriculum but two of the strongest in terms of school outcomes. It is interesting that participants said their teachers almost never discussed racial and class issues and their relationship to the curriculum. They also said that there was little discussion about how students, teachers, and administrators of different racial and cultural groups and income groups interacted in the school. Yet, they felt that all racial and cultural groups, (and to income groups to a slightly lesser degree) got along without major conflicts and this was perhaps the school's best characteristic. When asked about whether curriculum bias was discussed by teachers and how different groups interacted, nearly all study participants changed the discussion from the curriculum to a discussion of the consistently positive faculty to student and student to student relationships that existed in the school. The majority of the participants conveyed a feeling that conversations about race and any conflict or negative experiences that they associated with their traditional high schools should be forgotten in order to create a new race-neutral school community where everyone gets along.

Participants also discussed how the faculty and school culture reinforced an expectation that all students must be treated as equals. These data suggest three things. First, participants noted that positive relationships were observed at a significantly higher level than was relevance in the rigor, relevance, relationship framework. Second, the participants either believe or were trained to accept the notion that prejudice reduction involves de-emphasizing discussions about race, class, and cultural differences. The researcher interprets

this phenomenon as colorblind equality. Third, participants more openly talked about their observations of student interactions based on social class than based on race.

Emergent Theme 3: Learning Styles Influence Equity Pedagogy

Study participants viewed dimension #2 (equity pedagogy) as the strongest dimension in the school. All participants said that early/middle college high school teachers, unlike their teachers in their former traditional high schools, modified their teaching to meet their various learning styles. Moreover, teachers encouraged them to get extra help each morning during their planning time. The students felt that tutorial and personal visits to teachers before school were very useful. They also said their teachers consistently demonstrated a care ethic and were committed to their successful completion of their graduation requirements. Hence, they felt comfortable seeking any needed assistance from their teachers and remained confident that they would receive the help they needed.

Emergent Theme 4: Need for Content and Staff Diversity

Although most study participants changed the subject to positive inter-group relationships when asked about diversity in the curriculum, they communicated direct feedback about content diversity and staff diversity toward the end of the interviews. Nine out of ten participants said that they wish the curriculum content included more about different racial and cultural groups. They cited specific topics, books, or conversations that caused them to have a stronger personal connection with the curriculum and learning. When asked about whether staff diversity should be increased, the participants were evenly divided. Three participants said yes, three said maybe, and four said that the color of the teacher doesn't matter or that the school already had an appropriate balance. At the time that the participants graduated, 30 percent of the 13 certificated faculty positions were held by people

of color, three Black and one Hispanic (compared to 46 percent at present). Also, 8 out of 32 students (25 percent) in their senior class, the class of 2006, were students of color, 7 Black and 1 Hispanic.

Summary of Participant Results

This chapter provided data regarding ten former students' perceptions of impact of a multicultural curriculum in North Carolina's first early/middle college high school (GTCC-J) upon their student achievement. Following a snapshot of attendance and achievement data and a brief summary of what students have been doing since they graduated from high school 18 months ago, the researcher provided personal narratives for each of the ten participants in this study. As discussed in Chapter 3, the researcher utilized four important data analysis strategies. They include efficient and effective coding of data, the five content analysis steps process (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), validity checks to ensure trustworthiness, and triangulation.

The summary data table at the end of this chapter (Table 13) was used to interpret student responses within the context of achievement data and for triangulation. The data in the table support the participants' beliefs that the school's teachers and school structure were very beneficial in increasing their academic achievement. All ten of the participants experienced increases in their daily attendance rates and/or grade point averages. In addition, five of the participants began college courses when they were enrolled in the high school and three more attempted but were unsuccessful with college courses after graduating from the high school.

Consistent with code mapping procedures, the researcher created initial codes that include surface content analysis during the first iteration (see Appendix G). Attention was

focused on words, phrases, events, and participants' communication patterns that stand out. These items served as preliminary coding categories. During the second iteration, the researcher identified pattern variables, and during the third iteration, the researcher applied themes to the data set. This coding process helped the researcher to make sense of the data and to form descriptions. Utilizing constant comparative analysis techniques (Anfara et al., 2002), the researcher compared interview responses both within and between each of the five multicultural dimensions in the conceptual framework. The researcher then created revised codes/themes (See Appendix H).

Table 13

Participant Data Summary

Pseudonym	Years at GTCC-J	Absences	GPA	# of College Courses in High School	Postsecondary Plans/ # College Hours Completed to Date
Beyonce	2	9th-3 10th-4 11th-19 12th-15	9th-1.87 10th-3.37 11th-2.0 12th-3.0	0	Averett College, VA Sociology/ 0 Hours
Brad	2	9th-3 10th-4 11th-1 12th-2	9th-3.12 10th-3.25 11th-4.5 12th-4.0	12	Culinary arts-Business Johnson & Wales/ 49 Hours
Brittany	2	9th-73 10th-50 11th-pro 12th-20	9th-1.85 10th-2.0 11th-prom 12th-3.0	0	Social Work UNC-G or NCA&T/ 0 Hours
Chris	2	9th-8 10th-6 11th-6 12th-14	9th-2.13 10th-1.13 11th-2.9 12th-2.0	0	Fire Protection GTCC/ 0 Hours
Ella	2.5	9th-20 10th-0 11th-16 12th-9	9th-2.87 10th-3.0 11th-2.8 12th-3.0	5	Radiology & MSW Forsyth Tech/ 15 Hours
John	3	9th-7 10th-10 11th-3 12th-2	9th-2.87 10th-3.1 11th-3.7 12th-3.8	25	Heavy Equipment Technology-GTCC/ 76 hours
Michael	2	9th-6 10th-2 11th-1 12th-3	9th-2.25 10th-2.25 11th-3.9 12th-4.2	7	Computer Science-GTCC/ 22 hours
Royce	1	9th-5 10th-3 11th-0 12th-6	9th-2.25 10th-2.1 11th-2.3 12th-2.4	0	Automotive Technology- GTCC/ 0 Hours
Star	2	9th-10 10th-63 11th-19 12th-23	9th-1.4 10th-0.5 11th-3.25 12th-3.2	0	Cosmetology & Bus. Admin-GTCC/ 0 Hours
Victoria	2	9th-8 10th-5 11th-1 12th-4	9th-1.83 10th-1.66 11th-1.5 12th-2.71	1	Pediatric Nursing NCCU or Duke/ 3 Hours

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

> *In the early phases of our public wrestling with the education of Black students, curriculum was not a major concern: integration was the objective, and that did not necessarily imply any impact on the curriculum. Later, achievement became the objective, and while that affected curriculum, the impact was felt as much in science and mathematics as in social studies and English. In recent years, however, the curriculum, particularly in history, social studies, and the humanities, has been at the heart of school conflicts around race.* (Glazer, 1998)

Summary of Background of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to identify and describe former students' perceptions of how a multicultural curriculum impacted their academic achievement. These 10 Black graduates who participated in this study were formerly drop-outs or potential drop outs who graduated from North Carolina's first early/middle college high school. Created in 2001 by the Guilford County schools superintendent as a reform strategy to address the needs of disengaged and under-represented students and to reduce the dropout rate, Middle College high schools were replicated as both early and middle college schools across the state when Governor Mike Easley created the North Carolina New Schools Project in 2004. The Early/Middle College High School at Guilford Technical Community College-Jamestown (GTCC-J) campus became an early/middle college blend. Like other Learn and Earn early/middle college high schools across the state, it is required to have a rigorous and relevant curriculum, to serve a diverse student body, and to decrease drop outs and increase four year graduation rates (New Schools Project, 2004a).

This relatively new drop out reform strategy in North Carolina has received little study from scholars. Sellars (2006) and Bruce (2007) have authored qualitative studies that provide constructivist and participatory/advocacy perspectives that allow for multiple meanings of individual student experiences (Creswell, 2005). In addition to these qualitative studies, a major quantitative study has been commissioned to evaluate the efficacy of early and middle college high schools relative to improving outcomes related to attendance, college matriculation rates, test scores, discipline, and dropout rates (SERVE, 2006). In 2006, the U.S. Department of Education allocated a $2.87 million competitive grant (1 of 5 awarded nationally) for a quantitative four-year study of Learn and Earn early college high schools. This study will be a collaborative effort between the North Carolina New Schools Project, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the SERVE Center at UNC-Greensboro, and Duke University, and is supported by the Office of the Governor. Unfortunately, the findings from this study will not be available until 2011.

Summary of Methodology

This qualitative research study involved ten Black participants who were selected because they participated in an early/middle college study on resiliency and self-efficacy that was conducted when they were seniors in high school (Bruce, 2007). The researcher obtained permission to record their interviews and hired a specialist to transcribe each tape. All ten participants demonstrated some characteristics of potential dropouts when they were enrolled as underclassmen at their traditional high schools, as evidenced by their poor attendance and or grades (Bruce, 2007). The researcher initially made notes and jotted down thoughts without narrow, specific regard for the research problem. The researcher then took notes about the participants, what they said and did, their interactions, their conversations,

activities, and personal reactions and hunches. These data were recorded chronologically in a Microsoft Word table with two columns. The first column included field notes and the second column included codes and questions that the researcher updated several times (while the data was fresh). The purpose here was to look for patterns, frequently used words, and behaviors (Glesne, 2006). The researcher recorded initial themes/code (Appendix G) and, after reviewing the data several times, recorded revised themes/codes (Appendix H).

The researcher used James Banks' (2001) five dimensions of multicultural education framework as a lens to gather and interpret student interview data. Following a group of relationship building questions, students were asked a series of questions that relate to the five dimensions which include content integration, equity pedagogy, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, and an empowering school and social structure. These open-ended questions preceded follow-up and probing questions that were consistent with Rubin and Rubin's (2005) description of responsive interviewing. After taped interviews were transcribed, the researcher reviewed these written transcripts several times in order to provide triangulation and validity checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results: Summary

Through student interviews using Banks' (2001) five dimensions of multicultural education, the researcher described the degree to which the school's structure and multicultural curriculum did or did not provide new ways to meet the academic and affective needs of under-represented students by affirming their race, gender, class, and cultural differences. Chapter 4 provided a discussion of these data and four emergent themes that included (a) race/class neutral curriculum, (b) positive relationships and colorblind equality, (c) learning styles that influence equity pedagogy, and (d) the need for increased curriculum

and staff diversity. The researcher's analysis of these four emergent themes suggests that they are intertwined with three broad, related themes that have been widely discussed in the literature on school reform: (a) positive teacher-student relationships, (b) hidden curriculum, and (c) assimilation and socialization.

Related Theme 1: Positive Teacher-Student Relationships

The participants in this study provided significant evidence of healthy, positive relationships between students and teachers, as noted in emergent theme #2 (positive relationships and colorblind equality). Consistent with their voices in the Bruce (2007) study, the participants noted that teachers gave them lots of attention, made accommodations for their multiple learning styles, and made efforts to understand their lives outside of the classroom. They spoke of teachers as pseudo-guidance counselors and did not seem to view teachers as sacrificing student relationships in order to meet the demands of district mandated instructional pacing guides and state mandated end-of-course exams, as was the case in some of their traditional high school experiences. Their interview data suggest two things. First, positive relationships with teachers who viewed their initial role as pseudo counselors, was rated as the best thing about their early/middle college high school experience. Second, participants viewed positive relationships as a more evident component than curriculum relevance in the rigor, relevance, relationships framework that is used in Learn and Earn early/middle college high schools.

Relationship to previous research. Comer (1993, 1996) pioneered the importance of supportive relationships in schools. His School Development Program (SDP), which includes six developmental pathways and focuses on the management and organization of schools rather than curriculum reform, has yielded positive gains in case studies of many schools

across the county (Noblit, Malloy, & Malloy, 2001). Relationships form the foundation of Comer schools. Ancess (1994) found that positive relationships among students and their teachers and among adults create school learning communities that are less bureaucratic and supportive of increased student learning. Noddings (1992) found that schools with a strong care ethic cultivate the strengths of diverse students rather than maintain historical liberal education approaches in competitive environments.

The National Academies of Sciences (2003) provided a study on the nature and conditions of student engagement including issues of context, values, and definitions for caring relationships. The report argues that the terms engagement and motivation, though often used interchangeably, are not synonymous. Instead, motivation is a precursor to engagement. Allen (2005) argues in her resiliency study of 12 African-American males that their cultural norms must be affirmed in order for a true teacher-student bonding process to occur. Similarly, in his study of 10 high achieving African-American males in science classrooms, Trice (2005) argues that teachers must understand the impact of cultural influences on learning styles and racial identity.

Related Theme 2: Hidden Curriculum

As discussed in emergent theme #1 (race/class neutral curriculum), all study participants provided evidence that suggests that, although relationships were very strong, the school's multicultural curriculum was weak in dimension #1 (content integration) and dimension #3 (knowledge construction process). Although several participants cited examples of selected teachers integrating supplementary materials about different racial or cultural groups that were not found in their textbooks, they acknowledged that the curriculum was primarily Eurocentric and left them uninspired and less connected to their learning.

Interestingly, several of the students provided conflicting data that suggests, on one hand, they believe all students should embrace the curriculum without regard for race, gender, or class differences while, on the other hand, diversity within the curriculum and among the staff should be increased. Though they did not reference the term, their interviews suggest the existence of a hidden curriculum.

Relationship to previous research. Some scholars suggest that the practice of students (and educators) accepting a dominant set of values in schools is deeply rooted in history and continues today via what is termed the hidden curriculum (Dreeben, 1968; English, 1998; Gordon, 1982, 1983; Lareau, 1987; Lipman, 1998; Lynch, 1991; Moore, 1978; Wren, 1999). Jackson (1968) first coined the term when he argued that education should be understood as a socialization process. Giroux (2001) argues that the more recent focus on creating standardized curricula involves indoctrinating students with unwritten values and norms that serves the purpose of maintaining racial and class hierarchies. Apple (1996) argues that the justifications for national testing or standardized curricula are dangerous and damaging for students who are most vulnerable to failure in our schools. Though not opposed in theory to the notion of a national curriculum or the activity of testing, he cautions that one must question who leads the standards reform movement, and equally important, who benefits from them. He writes:

> The idea of a "common culture"-in the guise of the romanticized Western tradition of the neoconservatives (or even as expressed in the longings of some socialists)-does not give enough thought, then to the immense cultural heterogeneity of a society that draws its cultural traditions from all over the world. . . . The debate in England is similar . . . For most of its proponents, a common curriculum basically must transmit both the "common culture" and the high culture that has grown out of it. (p. 35)

Other scholars (Eubanks et al., 1997; Feinberg & Soltis, 2004; Spring, 1994; Wilbur, 1998) suggest that teachers unconsciously deliver the hidden curriculum or do so out of

obligations to follow mandated curricula. A relevant example for this study is the North Carolina Standard Course of Study that prescribes what teachers will teach in all core academic disciplines. The state also mandates that all public high school students take state created end-of-course exams in 11 subject areas and that these exams count 25 percent of their final course grades (English 9, 10th grade writing, algebra I, geometry, algebra II, physical science, biology, chemistry, physics, civics and economics, and U. S. history).

Related Theme 3: Assimilation and Socialization

The participants in this study provided evidence to support their perception that diversity should be affirmed in the curriculum and in staff recruitment, as discussed in emergent theme 4 (need for content and staff diversity). It is interesting to note that nine out of ten participants communicated that diversifying the curriculum would enhance their connection to learning. However, the participants were evenly divided about whether diversifying the school staff would similarly enhance their connection to learning. Three participants said yes, three participants said maybe, and four participants said the color of the teacher did not matter or that the school already had an appropriate racial balance. Thus, the participants strongly favored diversifying the curriculum but felt less strongly about diversifying the staff. When these different data are considered in tandem with the participants' overwhelming perception that the early/middle college high school should provide a new colorblind school experience where all students get along, one might begin to unpack these data by reviewing scholarly literature on assimilation and socialization in American schools.

Relationship to previous research. In addition to hidden curriculum research, several scholars have written specifically about assimilation and socialization in schools. As

discussed in Chapter 2, Spring (1994) provides a historical overview of conflicts that arose in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries vis á vis the purpose of public schooling in the United States. He discusses Horace Mann's view that the purpose of public schools in the 19th century was to create public norms and a common creed. He thought that as children were socialized together in common schools, religious and class distinctions would gradually diminish. By the 1890's, partly the result of a new wave of ethnic immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, public schools throughout the country focused heavily on teaching patriotism, institutional loyalty, and "Americanization." Reciting of the pledge of allegiance and singing patriotic songs would remain a part of many schools until recent years.

Several scholars suggest that centuries of Americanization has marginalized many students of color and created unequal power arrangements in schools (Fienberg & Soltis, 2004; Nieto, 1992; Orfield & Yun, 1999; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Banks (1999) argues that a major goal of contemporary multicultural education advocates is to provide both White and non-White students "with the skills, attitudes, and knowledge needed to function within their ethnic culture, mainstream culture, and within and across other ethnic cultures" (p. 2). He suggests that some students of color adopt Anglo-Saxon values, behavior, and ways of viewing the world in order to assimilate in schools. This can lead to alienation from their ethnic communities, mainstream society, or both. Although he believes that students have the ability to maintain allegiance to both their ethnic group and the nation-state, often those who reject basic group identity experience alienation and marginality (Ladson-Billings, 1995a & b; Noguera & Akom, 2000; Rothstein, 1991; Tatum, 1999).

Nieto (1999) argues that students of color face strong pressures to assimilate because their cultures are generally not affirmed or valued in schools. For example, she suggests that

culturally relevant pedagogy is often viewed as a "special treatment" for students of color but the culture and language of the dominant group is never thought of as such. This causes power and privilege rather than intelligence and ability to be central to inequality in schools. She acknowledges that ethnic groups do not fit into one idealized or romanticized culture; rather, cultures can be defined as "the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created, shared and transformed by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and religion" (p. 48). Other scholars provide extended discussions of the assimilation pressures faced by non-White students (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2004; Hemmings, 1996; Ogbu, 1992 & 2003; Tatum, 1987 & 1999).

Results: Functionalist Critique

Based on the emergent and related themes revealed by participant interview data in this study, the researcher suggests that functionalism has influenced the development of curriculum and operating procedures in Learn and earn early/middle college high schools. As Fienberg and Soltis (2004) note, "functionalism offers a way of thinking about the structuring, organizing, and reforming of schools in order to serve the perceived needs and purposes of society" (p. 28). It holds that schools must teach certain norms for students assimilate and participate in a colorblind, meritocratic American society. The researcher identified two critiques of the impact of functionalism on the Learn and Earn early/middle college high school dropout reform initiative in general and on multicultural curricula in particular. These two critiques suggests that functionalism negatively impacts school reform and dropout reform and impedes the implementation of multicultural education as advocated by scholars such as Banks (2001) and Nieto (1999).

Functionalism Impacts School Reform

The first critique presented by this study for dropout reform is that functionalism has a significant impact on the early/middle college reform initiative, particularly with regard to the state imposed curriculum, the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. A discussion of the definition of functionalism as well as its place as one of three major sociological perspectives bears this out. Functionalism is the oldest and most dominant of three widely cited theoretical perspectives in sociology and many social sciences. It emphasizes the way that parts of a society are structured to maintain its stability (Schaefer, 2004). This theoretical perspective contends that survival and maintenance of a social order is of utmost importance. Therefore, if any aspects of social life do not contribute to the stability of the social order, it is de-emphasized and will not be passed on from one generation to the next. It differs from the other two most dominant sociological perspectives, the conflict and interactionist perspective, which are concerned with groups in conflict for competing resources and the everyday interactions that are taken for granted respectively.

A major focus of functionalism involves the application of science methods to the real world and developing relationships or analogies between individuals and society. In the early twentieth century a functionalist approach to public education developed, largely due to the work and influence of French sociologists Emile Durkheim (Schaefer, 2004; Shepard & Greene, 2003). Durkheim was one of the first people to use scientific and statistical methods in scientific research. He investigated the needs that must be met in order for a social system to exist and posited that functions of an institution or society necessarily contributed to the survival and maintenance of them. In fact, social equilibrium is reached and maintained through socialization of the members of the group via shared norms and values.

Functionalism has been criticized as teleological suggesting that it reverses the order of cause and effect. This means that it explains the effect before the cause. A functionalist would argue that some religious practices exist to provide a function to the state. Opponents might argue that some religious practices predate questions about what is needed to preserve a state or if a state will actually survive. Notwithstanding criticisms to the contrary, scholars argue that functionalism and capitalist power have made an indelible impact on public K-12 education in the United States (Brosio, 1994).

Practices in schools, according to structural functionalists, are necessary practices that meet the needs of society (Schaefer, 2004). Throughout the twentieth century, there were struggles to define what these essential practices should be as well as who should make those decisions. Functionalists favored sorting students based on academic ability in order for the most talented students to advance commensurate with their perceived ability. Functions of the state required certain values, morals, and norms in order to provide some level of unity and uniformity (Dantley, 2005). Another necessary function of the state was to socialize students as Americans. Perhaps more important than believing that these and other functions were necessary to the survival and maintenance of society, functionalists believed then and many continue to believe now that these actions can be value free. Thus, issues of race, class, and gender are deemphasized.

The extent to which functionalism impacts school reform, and drop out reform in particular, is demonstrated by two functionalist concepts that are related to this study. They include (a) individualism versus collectivism, and (b) meritocracy. First, the functionalist point of view has historically promoted the Western norm of individualism over collectivism and it has held universal compulsory education as an important requirement of industrial

societies (Feinberg & Soltis, 2004; Rothstein, 1991). Many teachers unconsciously promote individualism to the exclusion of collectivism. Unlike traditional societies where children learn their work by watching their parents and other adults in their communities, children in modern societies receive most of their formal education from schools. Although functionalists believe that schools in modern societies provide more efficient, fair, and humane ways of training children to participate and advance in society than in traditional societies, they do not view taught norms of independence, achievement, universalism, and specificity as problematic for children whose families have a non-Western orientation. Several scholars argue that individualism is representative of the United States and Western Europe while collectivism is representative of 70% of non-Western world cultures (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008; Tatum, 1999). In these cultures, family/group success is valued over individual achievement, interdependence and cooperation are valued over independence and self-reliance, social orientation is valued over task orientation, and social intelligence is valued over cognitive intelligence. The participant interview data in this study are consistent with these non-Western values and norms.

All of the participants in this study prized relationships and group identify over individualism. Of utmost importance to them was that teachers and students form a positive, unified group culture, even to the extent that they perceived it to require that racial and cultural differences be downplayed or ignored. This coupled with their opposite desire for more curriculum content and staff diversity appears oxymoronic and may likely present a dilemma for the participants. At the heart of this conundrum then is the participants' cultural norm of collectivism versus the Western norm of individualism.

The second functionalist concept that impacts school reform and is related to this study involves the notion of meritocracy. It propagates that schools in modern societies provide equal opportunity and fair ways of training and preparing children to advance in society (Ballentine, 2001; Douthat, 2005; Lucas, 1999; McNamee & Miller, 2004). Rewards are thought of as byproducts of achievement and merit. Equal opportunity, then, occurs when people are chosen for certain roles based on their achieved, rather than their ascribed status (Ballentine, 2001; Shepard & Green; 2003). In most cases, race, gender, religion, and social class are regarded as irrelevant, ascribed characteristics while talent, ability, and motivation are regarded as achieved characteristics. Though opponents challenge the notion that a meritocratic social or educational system exists (Lucas, 1999; Noguera & Akom, 2000), functionalists provide three reasons for the desired shift from ascribed to achieved rewards in Western society. They include the obsolescence of passing skills down by families in traditional societies (in favor of compulsory education in industrialized societies), the need for new skills leading to expansion of talent pools, and the need to ensure political stability by convincing people to believe that they compete under a fair and just system of rules. This notion was very prevalent among the 10 participants in this study.

When asked about dimension one (content integration), all participants shared that issues of race and class were not included in the curriculum, except for limited supplementary materials provided by three teachers. Yet, when asked at the end of the interview to identify the best thing about the school and what one thing they think should be changed, none of the participants communicated a need to level the playing field with regard to the curriculum or any other area. Rather, each participant said that the school provided equal learning opportunities. One might question if the participants would provide similar

interview responses if they perceived the curriculum to be focused primarily on females with little or no discussion of males (or vice versa) or if they perceived the curriculum to be focused exclusively on Americans who live in the North to the exclusion of those who live in the South or the West.

Also, the five (out of 10) participants who did not take college classes while enrolled in high school and the eight participants who had not yet earned at least 18 college credit hours within three semesters of graduating from high school, faulted themselves exclusively for those outcomes. Given the fact that all of them experienced significant improvement in their daily attendance rates and grade point averages while in high school, one might expect that the participants would identify some perceived barriers to continuous academic success in their college courses after graduation. Their responses, however, suggest that they believe that the school curriculum, teachers, and school and college operating procedures had little or no impact on these outcomes. Rather, their interview data suggest that participants were strongly influenced by the functionalist notion of meritocracy.

That participants in this study both acknowledged and celebrated the significant impact that positive faculty/student relationships had upon their academic achievement, suggests that North Carolina's first early/middle college high school is pioneering in terms of increasing student support systems and academic rigor. However, their interview data also demonstrate that the school's curriculum is limited by its functionalist orientation. Based on data from study participants relative to the five dimension of multicultural education, the school's (or state's) curriculum is viewed as colorblind and issues of race, class, and gender are de-emphasized.

Functionalism Impedes Multicultural Education

The second critique presented by this study for dropout reform is that functionalism is inconsistent with multicultural education. As discussed in chapter 2, many scholars advocate reform of curricula as well as standard school operations in order to retire functionalist values and norms that are barriers to high student achievement for many students who drop out of school. In 2004, Governor Easley created the North Carolina New Schools Project and tasked it with rethinking how schools work more effectively in the state. Part of this task involved determining exactly what curriculum content is necessary for all students to learn in view of standardized tests which measure student achievement. As discussed in the previous section, the New Schools Project staff as well as the state board of education adopted the Rigor, Relevance, Relationships framework.

Although rigor speaks to preparing students to meet state standards (based on the North Carolina Standard Course of Study) and positive relationships are commonly accepted as necessary tools to effectively engaging high school students, it is unclear if a relevant curriculum was designated to generically refer to embedding work based experiences in the high school curriculum in order to train a twenty-first century work force, or if a relevant curriculum refers to multicultural education. Given the high numbers of African-American and Hispanic students who drop out (New Schools Project, 2004), construction of a relevant curriculum might well refer to both. As currently designed and promoted, the Learn and Earn early college/middle college model lacks multicultural education, as advocated by scholars. According to Desimone (2002), "proponents of this ideology maintain that particular segments of society are racially oppressed, exploited and marginalized, and that to be successful, education reform must acknowledge and integrate these perspectives (p. 458).

Many of these scholars (Eubanks et al., 1997) have convincingly argued that systemic change in schools "requires demystifying the hegemonic culture" since "elites not only rule through informal consent, incentives, or even the use of force but rather often taken for granted, accepted social conventions or practices that define and constitute what is natural, normal, and the way things are or should be" (p. 2). Proponents of multi-cultural education have historically based their argument on the moral issue of including the contributions of all groups, including minorities and women, to American society. However, state policy makers need a more sophisticated analysis and reasoning in order to address the issues raised by scholars. A more comprehensive policy is needed because the existing one narrowly interprets multi-culturalism as curriculum add-ons during Black and Women history months (Glazer, 1998). In addition to what content is included in school curricula, Tomlinson (2001) posits that in order for teachers to really differentiate instruction to meet the needs of diverse groups of learners, they must both learn and affirm what she calls "culture-influenced preferences." Multi-cultural education then might be thought of as both what diverse students learn in the curriculum as well as how students of different ability levels and cultures learn.

Results: Implications for Dropout Reform

Two major implications presented by this study for dropout reform involve the rigor, relevance, relationships framework (that was adopted by the New Schools Project for all Learn and Earn early/middle college high schools) and the issue of sustainability. Student interview responses provide evidence of a rigorous curriculum and strong, positive relationships among students and faculty. Their responses do not provide evidence of a clear definition of relevance in the curriculum. The following discussion of the evolution and current meaning of the rigor, relevance, relationship framework will provide a context to

question why the rigor and relationships components are more developed in the school and why the relevance component is less developed in the school. It is followed by a discussion of the need to acknowledge student perceptions as a tool for ensuring sustainability of the early/middle college reform effort.

Rethinking the Rigor, Relevance, Relationships Framework

The New Schools Project adopted the rigor, relevance, relationships framework to complement its advocacy for eliminating student ability tracking and for offering all students a default college-university prep curriculum (New Schools Project, 2004b). Hence, there are multiple reasons why the New Schools Project chose to focus on rigorous and relevant instruction. First, students live in a rapidly changing world in which technological development is the centerpiece. They must be equipped with lifelong skills to adapt and deal with such change rather than simply the prerequisite skills to enter college. The International Center for Leadership in Education (International Center for Leadership in Education [L.C.L.E.], 2005), which created the Rigor and Relevance Framework, contends that essential skills such as one's use of technology and using it to alter one's own life, while asking the appropriate financial, technological and professional questions, cannot be taught through a single topic or school subject. Instead, students should develop such skills through lessons that are challenging, relevant to the real world, and that encompass a variety of subjects.

Second, schools must endeavor to motivate all students. The I.C.L.E. (2005) argues that the standards movement has, particularly since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, become less interesting and less meaningful for school students. The I.C.L.E. (2005) states:

> By looking at teaching and learning from the perspective of relevance as well as rigor and by emphasizing hands-on learning, we can engage students in meaningful and challenging work. Rigorous and relevant instruction motivates students to learn. (p. 3)

Recently, a group of researchers began studying the definitions and application of rigorous instruction North Carolina high schools (Edmunds, McColsky, & Lewis, 2006).

Third, there is utility in emphasizing essential knowledge and skills. Students fail to see the relevance of learning when they are restricted to a continuous flow of content topics with rote facts that they must quickly learn, recite for a test, and then forget. Rigorous and relevant instruction attempts to put learning in context, thus enabling students to experience a problem and make the relevant connections between learning in the classroom and the real-world. In this context, real world learning will occur and rigor will follow (I.C.L.E., 2005)

Consequently, introducing the Rigor and Relevance Framework entails a shift in focus from teaching to learning. Typically, the teacher imparts knowledge through presenting and demonstrating knowledge; however, students do not really learn and understand concepts until they are successfully engaged in a lesson (I.C.L.E., 2005). Teachers need to plan instruction that engages students, linking a variety of both curriculum standards and benchmarks. The I.C.L.E. (2005) adds, "Without real-world uses of these skills, they are solely intellectual pursuits. It is a little like learning the rules and skills of driving a car without ever actually sitting behind the wheel and going for a drive" (p. 9).

The Rigor and Relevance Framework is a tool for teachers to utilize in planning and delivering meaningful instruction. It provides a fresh means of looking at standards and assessment using a simple and easy to understand structure that bridges the gap between schools and the community (I.C.L.E., 2005). The framework consists of two continuums. The Knowledge Taxonomy continuum is based on Bloom's Taxonomy and

represents six levels of understanding that become more complex the higher one rises up the continuum (I.C.L.E., 2005). The second continuum, the Application Model, measures the degree to which learning and knowledge is connected to real-world using five distinct levels starting from a limited application and ending with a comprehensive application. The Rigor and Relevance Framework as shown in Figure 2 also consists of four quadrants.

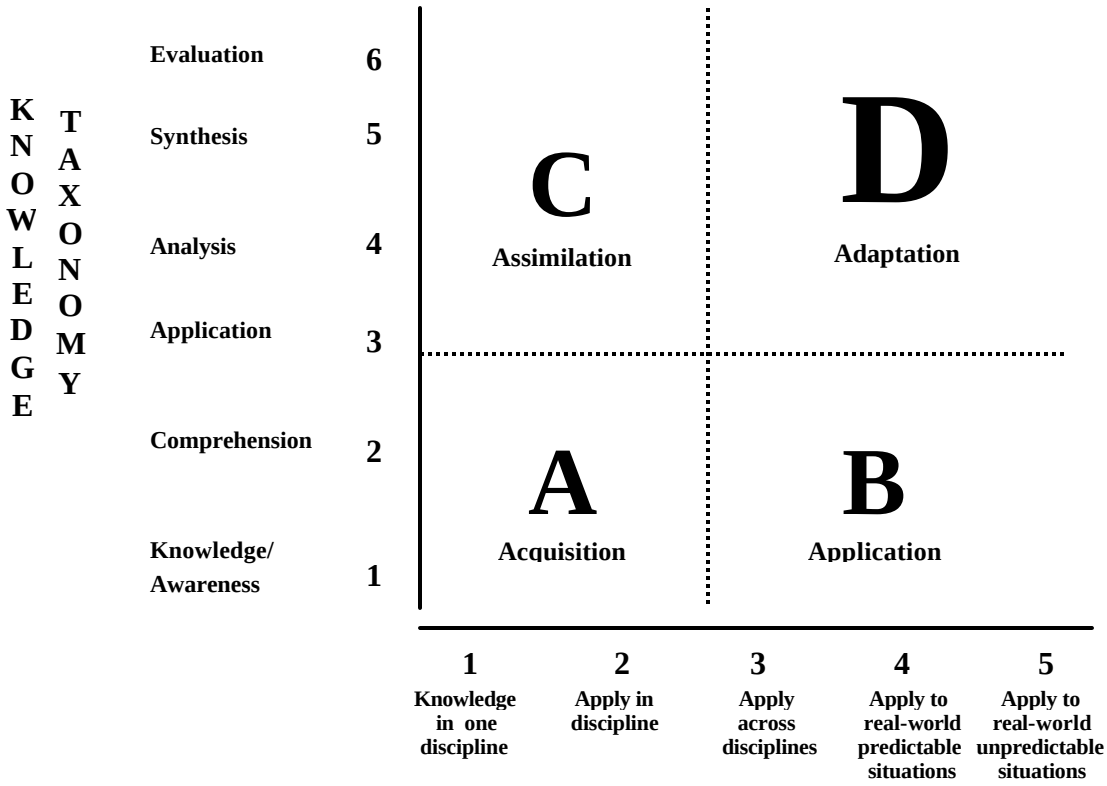


Figure 2. Rigor, Relevance Framework

Each quadrant, A through D, has a label describing the degree of knowledge and the extent with which it is applied to the real-world (I.C.L.E., 2005). Quadrant A, the Acquisition quadrant, entails the mere storage and recall of information for knowledge's sake with application limited to the discipline being taught. Quadrant C, Assimilation, entails complex thinking but still relatively narrow application of the knowledge to real

world situations. In contrast, Quadrant B, Application, entails a high degree of application, but not necessarily complex thinking. Ultimately, the goal is for students to reach Quadrant D, the Adaptation quadrant, where they demonstrate the complex problem solving skills and can apply them in an unpredictable real-world.

Recently, a new body of research has developed centered around defining what rigor means as well as what it "looks like" in high school classrooms in North Carolina (Edmunds et al., 2006). These scholars at the SERVE Center at UNC-Greensboro are currently providing technical assistance to the North Carolina New Schools Project as principals are encouraged to participate in learning visits in schools across the state to identify and calibrate the level of rigor in them. They argue that providing rigor to all students is a complex task that requires a refined focus from teachers as well as district and state leaders. In addition to providing rubrics for student work and a rigor in the classroom tool, the authors discuss the struggle that exists in trying to align the different definitions of rigor from the Gates Foundation, the North Carolina State Board of Education, The New Schools Project and others. They argue, however, that rigor has the best chance of being institutionalized in North Carolina high schools if all the parts of the pyramid in Figure 3 are in place. In addition to rigorous and relevant instruction, the New Schools Project curriculum framework includes a third focus on relationships which was discussed earlier in this chapter.

This discussion of the rigor, relevance, relationships framework provide a context to interpret interview responses from the ten participants in this study. They participants provide evidence of strong, positive student relationships in the school. Their academic data and the school data report (see Appendix K) provide some evidence of a rigorous curriculum and rigorous instructional practices. Based on the trend from 2004 to 2007 of test scores

increasing as the racial and economic demographics of the school increases, one might assume that rigorous instruction and positive relationships have increased. Participant interview responses, however, provide little evidence of an emphasis on relevance in the curriculum, as defined in Bank's (2001) five dimensions of multicultural education.

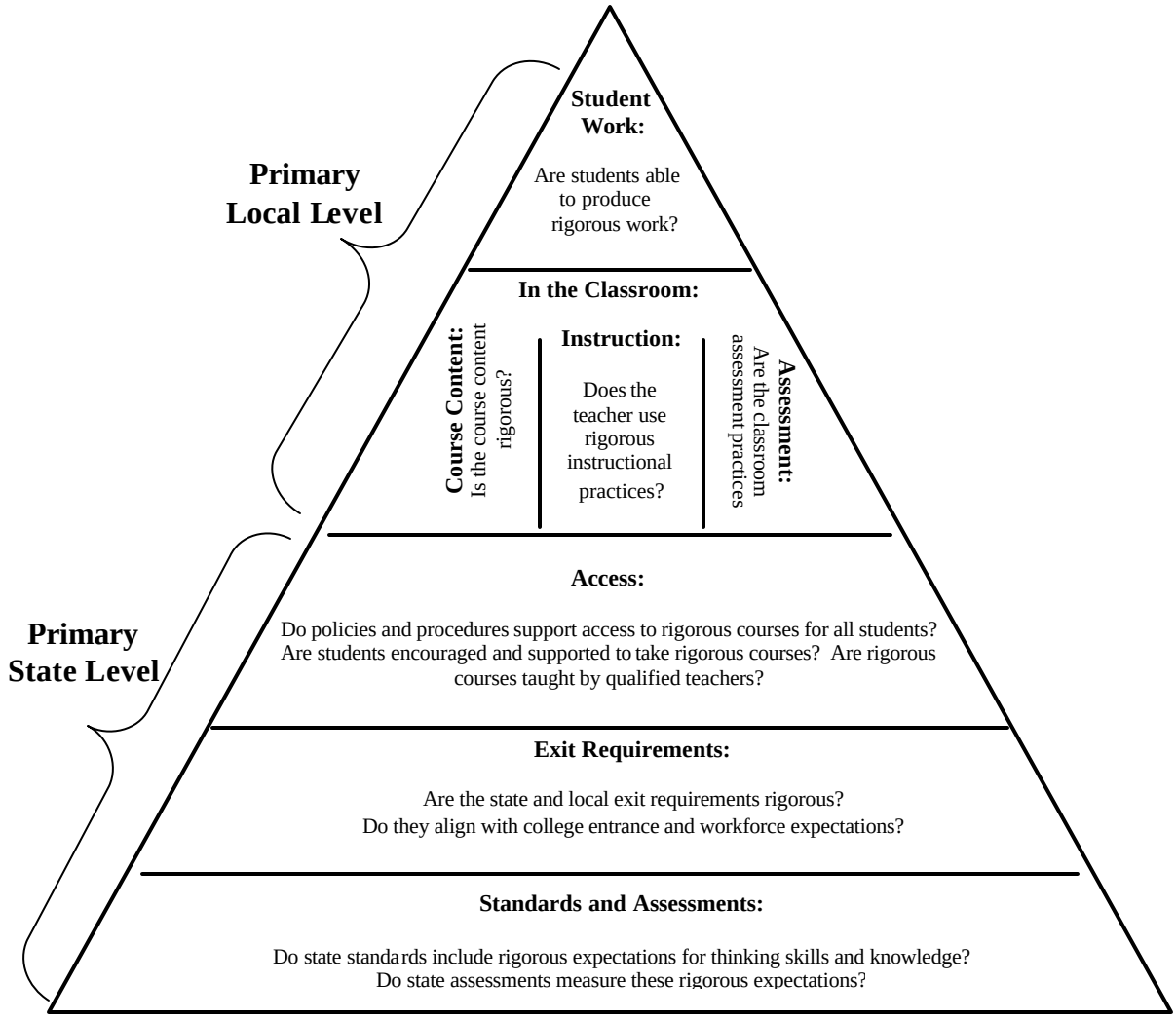


Figure 3. ***Rigor Pyramid***

Sustainability

The second implication presented by this study for dropout reform involves sustainability of the reform effort. Given the unsustainable nature of many reforms in public

education, the researcher suggests that study of student perceptions will be one key to sustaining early/middle college high schools. A review of national and state high school reform efforts support Tyack and Cuban's (1995) notion that there exists a historical tension between Americans' deep beliefs in education and the gradual change of educational practices. Against this historical backdrop, one may question if the Learn and Earn early/middle college high school reform strategy can be sustained over a period of years. Salient themes in the high school reform literature discussed in chapter 2 are that high school reforms occur slowly, are limited in nature, are often unsustainable over a period of time, and are conceived within functionalist beliefs about education that adversely affect non White students and economically disadvantaged students. Relative to the persistent drop out problem, some scholars and policy makers increasingly believe that the problem is inherent in the design and structure of the traditional high school (Allen, Almeida, & Steinberg, 2001; Malloy, 1997; NASSP, 2004). Hence, many scholars advocate not only reforming high school structures and operating procedures, they also advocate implementing comprehensive multicultural education curricula (Ancess, 1994; Costa, 2001; Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Ort, 2002; Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). Notwithstanding the efficacy of structural reforms, scholars argue that educators must be careful not to conclude that this problem "can be solved by adjusting incentives, resources, by staff development, or public relation" (Marshall, 1985, p. 360).

Moreover, a growing body of multicultural literature suggests that school reform initiatives have not succeeded in part because they failed to address and affirm issues related to race, gender, class, and culture (Banks, 2001; Gay, 2000; Korn & Bursztyn, 2002; Larkin & Sleeter, 1995; Nieto, 1992). However, there are few qualitative research studies that

analyze the design and structures of new early and middle college high schools in North Carolina and the extent to which they represent a continuation of or a departure from functionalist influences. More qualitative studies are needed to address this gap in the budding literature on early and middle college high schools in North Carolina. The results from these studies, particularly student voice, are essential for teachers, administrators, and policy makers who seek guidance regarding modifications to the reform initiative.

In the case of this study, for example, former students clearly suggested that the most significant strategy or tool used by school faculty to re-engage students at risk of dropping out of school was powerful relationships. They also suggested that they desired and could benefit from a curriculum that was more inclusive of race, class, and cultural differences. The researcher suggests state policy makers must be careful not to focus their evaluations of these schools on quantitative measures alone, such as attendance rates, test scores, and grades. If these schools are to evolve and to be sustained over a period of time, Bruce (2007) convincingly argues that student voices must be heard:

> As new high school reform effort strategies continue to emerge in secondary education, such as smaller learning communities within the existing high school structure, and on other campuses of higher learning, such as middle and early college high schools, it is critical that researchers choose to examine the successes or failures of these efforts beyond grades, standardized test data, and attendance. (pp. 157-158)

Conclusions

This study examined ten Black graduates' perceptions of the impact of a multicultural curriculum in North Carolina's first new early/middle college high school upon their academic achievement. The researcher offers two conclusions and five recommendations for further study. Given the alleged comprehensive nature of this high school reform that was communicated in a 2004 press release (Appendix F) by Governor Easley, the researcher's

first conclusion is that these schools warrant significant study by scholars. The faculty and students of North Carolina's first early/middle college high school appear to be capitalizing on the groundswell of reform. Over the school's seven year history, hundreds of drop outs have returned to school and graduated, disengaged students have become re-engaged in learning, out-of-school suspensions have been eliminated, student failures have been reduced to an all-time low, and the school has played a significant role in helping to reduce the Guilford County Schools district's drop-out rate from 6% to 2.99% (Guilford County Schools, 2007). In addition, as student racial and socio-economic diversity tripled in the school since 2004, student attendance rates have increased from 89% to 95% and state composite test scores have increased from 43% to over 70% (see Appendix K).

Time and further study will demonstrate if the school can continue to improve and be sustained. Desimone's (2002) longitudinal school reform studies suggest that educators often appear to improve entire schools but ultimately make only subgroup or structural changes. This notion is significant when one considers that the state of North Carolina opened the nation's first state university in 1789 and it guaranteed all of its citizens a "free and appropriate public education," yet, in the year 2007 the state reported a high school graduation rate of only 68 percent (New Schools Project, 2007). Many scholars have suggested that, rather than high school students being the cause of their own failure, surface level reforms coupled with functionalist school policies, structures, and operating procedures perpetuate achievement gaps and high dropout rates, particularly for students with defensive world views (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Jerald, 2006; Malloy, 1997). If student voices are included in future qualitative studies of early/middle college high schools, they will provide unique perspectives relative to the extent that functionalist school thinking, policies, and

structures contribute to the problem of high dropout rates, in both traditional and redesigned high schools.

The researcher's second conclusion is that the North Carolina New Schools Project's rigor, relevance, relationships, and instructional framework are inadequate in the area of curriculum relevance. The Guilford County School district and New School Projects officials have garnered national attention for purporting to significantly reduce the dropout rate by utilizing the rigor, relevance, and relationships framework. Although a growing body of research underscores the need for school curricula to specifically address reasons why different racial and economic groups of students are disconnected and drop out of school as well as the cultural contexts that influence how students learn curriculum content, this focus is not explicitly addressed in the New Schools Project design literature. Glazer (1998) argues that most of the literature on multicultural education was originally focused on higher education, not high schools. One might be less surprised then, with this study's finding that the relevance part of the rigor, relevance, relationships framework is significantly less developed than the rigor and relationships components.

The researcher endorses the suggestion from scholars that enacting reforms to functionalist school policies, operating procedures, and structures are inadequate strategies to address burgeoning dropout rates and achievement gaps. Rather, early and middle college high schools associated with the New Schools Project ought to implement multicultural curricula to affirm cultural differences among students and to provide culturally relevant instruction (Banks, 2001; Delpit, 1995; Gay, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 1999; Sleeter & Grant, 2006). Nieto (1992) argues that true multicultural education nothing short of a process of comprehensive school reform that ensures a basic education for all students.

Absent a definition for curriculum relevance in the New Schools Project's rigor, relevance, relationships framework, well meaning teachers at North Carolina's first early/middle college high school teach the state's functionalist curriculum, the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. The curriculum, according to participants in this study, is taught with little discussion of inherent biases in the curriculum, with the exception of a social studies teacher and a foreign language teacher. Willinsky (1998) notes that this is a long standing problem in our schools and will take a long time to acknowledge and fix:

> In more than one sense, the educational project of post colonialism in the West is only beginning. After the process of decolonization began in earnest after the Second World War with the repeated successes of the independence movements, the West has barely begun to see beyond the divisions generated by the same sensibilities that drove imperial expansion over the face of the globe. . . . It is about imperialism's influence on the educated view of the world that the West cultivated during the era of empire. We need to learn again how five centuries of studying, classifying, and ordering humanity within an imperial context gave rise to peculiar and powerful ideas of race, culture, and nation that were, in effect, conceptual instruments that the West used to both divide up and to educate the world. . . . It may take generations to realize all that lies buried in this body of knowledge as a way of knowing the world. (pp. 1-2)

Recommendations for Educators

Based on the themes revealed by participant interview data and the implications for reform discussed in this chapter, the researcher suggests three recommendations for educators associated with Early and Middle College high schools in North Carolina. These recommendations are inclusive of practitioners, researchers, and those who make educational policy and funding decisions that impact the schools. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Commission a study to define and develop the relevance component of the rigor, relevance, relationships framework that is currently used in Learn and Earn early and middle college high schools (at the school, district, and state levels).

2. Commission a study to review the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and determine how multicultural curricula can be instituted and sustained in all Learn and Earn early and middle college high schools (at the school, district, and state levels).
3. Commission a study to establish a structured mechanism to identify and acknowledge the perceptions of different racial, gender, and socio-economic groups relative to the curriculum and operating procedures in Learn and Earn early and middle college high schools (at the school, district, and state levels).

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the interview responses provided by 10 Black graduates of North Carolina's first early/middle college high school, the researcher suggests six areas for further study. First, a follow up study is recommended with each of the ten participants in this study in 18-24 months to further gauge their perceptions about the school curriculum and structure and to chart their progress toward completing an associate's degree. Second, a replication of this study is recommended that involves other early/middle college students both in Guilford County and other participating school districts in order to broaden our understanding of student perceptions of multicultural curricula in early/middle college high schools. Third, a follow up study with the 10 Black participants in this study and the Bruce (2007) study is recommended. The longitudinal data generated from these former students will help researchers assess the efficacy of the Learn and Earn early and middle college high school reform initiative.

Fourth, a study is recommended to assess how other Learn and Earn early and middle college high schools across the state define and implement the relevance component of the

rigor, relevance, relationships instructional framework. And, given the indelible impact that functionalist thinking and standard operating processes have made on public high schools, how multicultural education as defined by scholars such as James Banks (2001) might be implemented within this framework. This is critical given the researcher's contention that a new policy window has opened due to a growing body of non-functionalist educational reform research, a national focus on four year graduation rates, and due to North Carolina's focus on reducing dropouts through the early college model of the North Carolina New Schools Project. While proponents of multi-cultural education have historically based their argument on the moral issue of including the contributions of all groups, including minorities and women, to the social sciences, more substantive reasoning and strategies will likely be required to develop and pass a multi-cultural education policy that is congruent with the traditionalistic political culture of the state of North Carolina.

Fifth, given a twenty year shift in federal and state educational policy from equity to excellence (Brown, 1994), research studies are warranted relative to how funding for these schools will be sustained when five year early college implementation grants from the Gates Foundation and the New Schools Project expire. This is very important given how the demands of school accountability coincided with this shift that was first promoted by president Ronald Reagan and found unwavering support from each subsequent president, including Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. Brown argues that the focus on excellence is a low cost strategy because, forty years after the Brown decision, it still devalues school integration. Moreover, states are responsible for the overwhelming majority of educational spending, not the federal government (Brown & Hunter, 2006). One can only wonder if

equity can become a dominant focus over excellence and standards in these redesigned schools.

The sixth recommendation for further study involves student recruitment, selection, and admission processes in early and middle college high schools. The New Schools Project recommends that Learn and Earn schools reflect the diversity of individual school districts in terms of race, gender, socio-economic status, academic ability, students with disabilities, and students of different levels of motivation (New Schools Project, 2004). It is unclear how this approach fits into the historical evolution of school desegregation, magnet schools, and legal challenges. It is also unclear the extent to which Black and poor students are being served in early and middle college high schools across the state. Given the long standing "go slow" policy on school integration (Brown, 2004) and the continued educational and social dislocation of Black and poor students, research studies might offer predictions about whether these schools will become integrated or mirror existing segregation patterns within respective school districts in the state, as well as the role that state and federal courts might play in this process.

The seventh and final recommendation for further study is the extent to which early and middle college high schools not only increase high school graduation rates, but also increase college graduation rates and subsequent earning power for Black and poor students after they graduate from high school. When he created the North Carolina New Schools Project and the Learn and Earn early college initiative in 2004, Governor Mike Easley predicted that 9th grade students who enroll in an early college high schools would graduate with more economic opportunities:

> Learn and Earn will change North Carolina high schools so that students receive the skills and training they need for high-skilled, better paying jobs. If students know

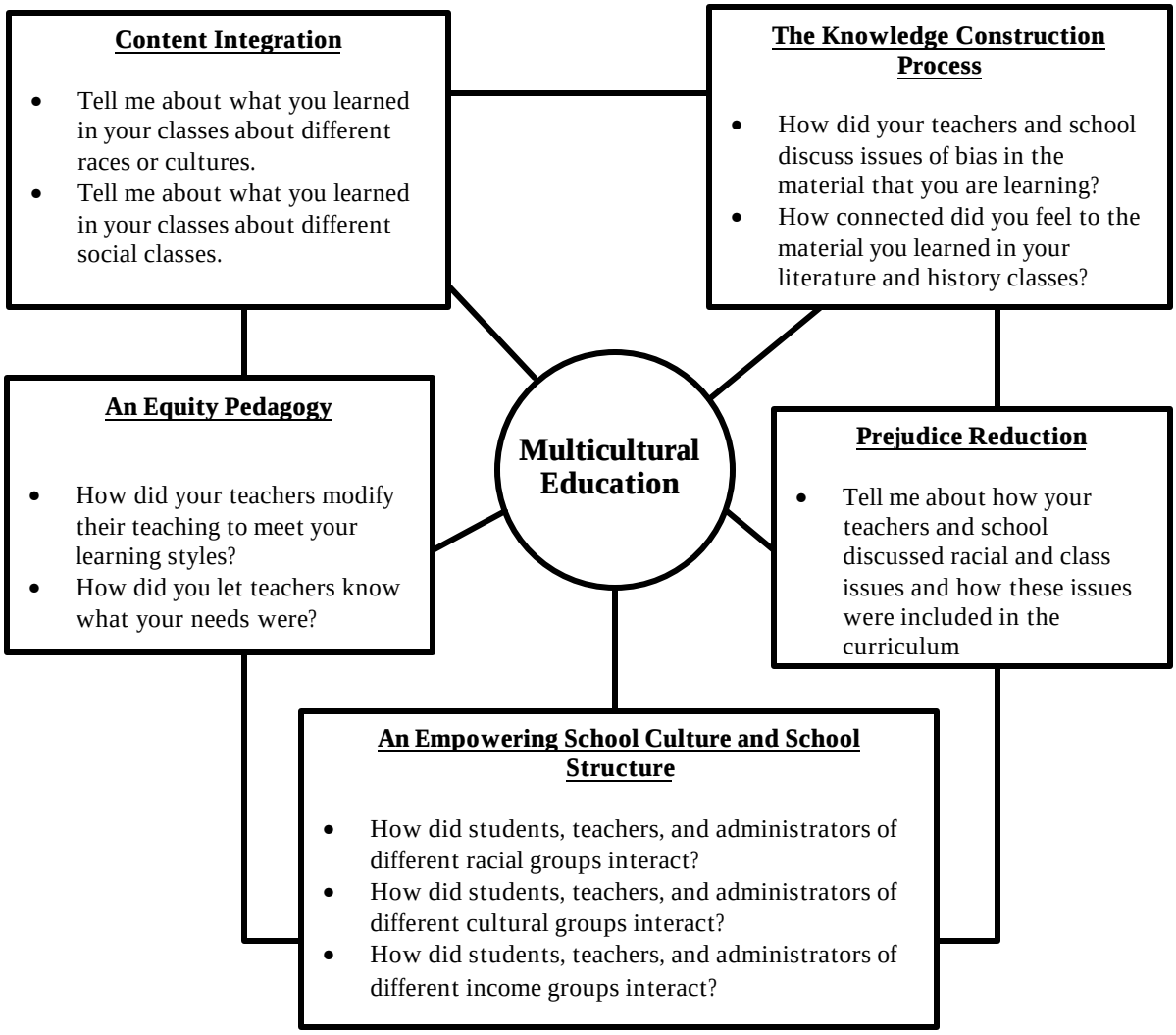
> they can graduate with practical job skills and an advanced degree, they will have an additional incentive to complete their degree before entering the workforce. . . . We are losing too many students in grade 9 and 12 who drop out. . . . There is a real demand for skilled workers in our transitioning economy. Almost all of the new projects we recruit are looking for workers with at least an associate's degree and it is our job to provide it. Our Learn and Earn program will meet that need. (Easley, 2004a, p. 1)

Although North Carolina's first early/middle college high school has served since 2001 as a pioneering school district and state leader in reducing dropouts and increasing four year graduation rates, further research is needed to understand why 5 out of 10 (50%) of the participants in this study took one or more community college classes while in high school and the other 5 did not. Also, why did only 2 out of the 10 participants (20%) in this study earn 30 or more college hours (the equivalent of 2 semesters) by December 2007 (3 semesters after their high school graduation date?). Would these outcomes be different if they enrolled in the school in the 9th grade as opposed to the 11th grade? Also, given the very supportive and positive faculty-student relationships referenced by all study participants, what school factors account for these low outcomes? To what extent and how might career and work-based learning be integrated (along with multicultural education) into the curriculum relevance component of the rigor, relevance, relationships framework? And finally, given the loss of skilled jobs in rural and urban areas (Wilson, 1996) and Governor Easley's optimism, how might significant minority educational and economic gains be achieved for Black and poor students without the majority perceiving these gains as coming at their expense (Nieto, 1999; SERVE, 2006; Smoot, 2005; Tyack & Cuban, 1995)?

Appendix A

Student Interview Questions

- Rapport building question: What have you been doing since graduation?



Closing questions:

- What would you say to a Black student who was thinking about applying to this school?
- What was the best thing about this school? What one thing would you recommend be changed?
- Do you think our faculty should be more diverse?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your high school experience?

Appendix B

Student Interview Questions—Modified Format

Name:	Phone #:
Address:	College Courses Taken:

Rapport building question:

- What have you been doing since graduation?

Content Integration

- Tell me about what you learned in your classes about different races or cultures.
- Tell me about what you learned in your classes about different social classes.

An Equity Pedagogy

- How did your teachers modify their teaching to meet your learning styles?
- How did you let teachers know what your needs were?

The Knowledge Construction Process

- How did your teachers and school discuss issues of bias in the material that you are learning?
- How connected did you feel to the material you learned in your literature and history classes?

Prejudice Reduction

- Tell me about how your teachers and school discussed racial and class issues and how these issues were included in the curriculum

An Empowering School Culture and School Structure

- How did students, teachers, and administrators of different racial groups interact?
- How did students, teachers, and administrators of different cultural groups interact?
- How did students, teachers, and administrators of different income groups interact?

Closing questions:

- What would you say to a Black student who was thinking about applying to this school?
- What was the best thing about this school? What one thing would you recommend be changed?
- Do you think our faculty should be more diverse?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your high school experience?

Appendix C

Multicultural Educator Self Assessment

(Nieto, 2002)

	Affirmation, Solidarity, and Critique	Respect	Acceptance	Tolerance	Monocultural Education
Antiracist/Anti discriminatory	Racism is unacknowledged. Policies and practices that support discrimination are left in place. These include low expectations and refusal to use students' natural resources (such as language and culture) in instruction. Only a sanitized and "safe" curriculum is in place.	Racism is unacknowledged. Policies and practices that support discrimination are left in place. These include low expectations and refusal to use students' natural resources (such as language and culture) in instruction. Only a sanitized and "safe" curriculum is in place.	Racism is unacknowledged. Policies and practices that support discrimination are left in place. These include low expectations and refusal to use students' natural resources (such as language and culture) in instruction. Only a sanitized and "safe" curriculum is in place.	Racism is unacknowledged. Policies and practices that support discrimination are left in place. These include low expectations and refusal to use students' natural resources (such as language and culture) in instruction. Only a sanitized and "safe" curriculum is in place.	Racism is unacknowledged. Policies and practices that support discrimination are left in place. These include low expectations and refusal to use students' natural resources (such as language and culture) in instruction. Only a sanitized and "safe" curriculum is in place.
Basic	Defines education as the 3 R's and the "canon." "Cultural literacy is understood within a monocultural framework. All important knowledge is essentially European American. This Eurocentric view is reflected throughout the curriculum, instructional strategies, and environment for learning.	Defines education as the 3 R's and the "canon." "Cultural literacy is understood within a monocultural framework. All important knowledge is essentially European American. This Eurocentric view is reflected throughout the curriculum, instructional strategies, and environment for learning.	Defines education as the 3 R's and the "canon." "Cultural literacy is understood within a monocultural framework. All important knowledge is essentially European American. This Eurocentric view is reflected throughout the curriculum, instructional strategies, and environment for learning.	Defines education as the 3 R's and the "canon." "Cultural literacy is understood within a monocultural framework. All important knowledge is essentially European American. This Eurocentric view is reflected throughout the curriculum, instructional strategies, and environment for learning.	Defines education as the 3 R's and the "canon." "Cultural literacy is understood within a monocultural framework. All important knowledge is essentially European American. This Eurocentric view is reflected throughout the curriculum, instructional strategies, and environment for learning.
Pervasive	No attention is paid to student diversity.	No attention is paid to student diversity.	No attention is paid to student diversity.	No attention is paid to student diversity.	No attention is paid to student diversity.
Important for All Students	Ethnic and/or women's studies, if available, are only for students from that group. This is frill that is not important for other students to know.	Ethnic and/or women's studies, if available, are only for students from that group. This is frill that is not important for other students to know.	Ethnic and/or women's studies, if available, are only for students from that group. This is frill that is not important for other students to know.	Ethnic and/or women's studies, if available, are only for students from that group. This is frill that is not important for other students to know.	Ethnic and/or women's studies, if available, are only for students from that group. This is frill that is not important for other students to know.
Education for Social Justice	Education supports the status quo. Thinking and acting are separate.	Education supports the status quo. Thinking and acting are separate.	Education supports the status quo. Thinking and acting are separate.	Education supports the status quo. Thinking and acting are separate.	Education supports the status quo. Thinking and acting are separate.
Process	Education is primarily content: who, what, where, when. The "great White men" version of history is propagated. Education is static.	Education is primarily content: who, what, where, when. The "great White men" version of history is propagated. Education is static.	Education is primarily content: who, what, where, when. The "great White men" version of history is propagated. Education is static.	Education is primarily content: who, what, where, when. The "great White men" version of history is propagated. Education is static.	Education is primarily content: who, what, where, when. The "great White men" version of history is propagated. Education is static.
Critical Pedagogy	Education is domesticating. Reality is represented as static, finished, and flat.	Education is domesticating. Reality is represented as static, finished, and flat.	Education is domesticating. Reality is represented as static, finished, and flat.	Education is domesticating. Reality is represented as static, finished, and flat.	Education is domesticating. Reality is represented as static, finished, and flat.

Appendix D-1

The Equitable School Self Review- Part One
(Duran, 2002)

How is your school doing?			Just Beginning	Good Start	Well on our Way	Extensively Implemented
Curriculum	The content and perspective of the curriculum	The content of the curriculum in all subjects we teach is global and inclusive				
		We explore the histories of all peoples, and the factors that shaped their histories				
		We deal openly and frankly with the issue of oppression in our history				
		We encourage discussion of racial, cultural, linguistic, religious, gender, homophobic, class discriminations in the larger society, community, and the school at the student level of understanding				
	Mechanisms in place to review materials for bias	We routinely review materials for biases and involve teachers, students, and parents in the process				
		We have procedures to ensure that concerns and recommendations are discussed by all staff and acted upon				
		We use antibias tools to determine criteria for reviewing				
		We analyze bias in texts, learning materials, visuals, films, performances, the Internet, etc.				
	Selection of materials and learning experiences	Our school reflect in a positive way, the racial, linguistic, cultural, religious, sexual and class diversity of our society and the world				
		Information about the cultural experience and history of all peoples permeates the subjects we teach				
		Our materials and practices address global changes and evolving community standards				
School Climate and Management	We consider the diversity of our student population and demonstrate our commitment to equity of our hiring the promotion practices. We support new teachers.					
	We provide in-school P.D. for all staff- teaching and non-teaching- that regularly addresses issues of racial and human rights discrimination in education					
	We use community and parent resources to promote anti-racist, anti-discriminatory goals.					
	We confront all forms of discrimination by consistently following clear procedures and school policies and we inform staff, students, and parents of their rights and responsibilities. We review our goals and expectations in a yearly basis.					
	We recognize students' accomplishments without reinforcing racial, cultural, linguistic, religious, sexual and class stereotypes.					
	We ensure that student participation in extra-curricular activities and academic courses are balanced.					
	We ensure that student participation in extra-curricular activities and academic courses is balances (e.g. not one group over represented in sports and another in math.)					
	We ensure that school events recognize and include the diverse population of our schools and society					
	We provide for extra-curricular activities that are relevant to all students.					
	We provide opportunities for all students to interact comfortably with peers from a variety of racial, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds.					
	We have a code of behavior that addresses all forms of discrimination.					
	We support teachers and students who challenge discrimination and engage in anti-racist anti-discriminatory activities.					

Appendix D-2

The Equitable School Self Review- Part Two
(Duran, 2002)

How is your school doing?		Just Beginning	Good Start	Well on our Way	Extensively Implemented
Assessment and Placement	We use a variety of assessment practices and tools when assessing students (e.g. performance based criterion referenced, nor referenced, etc.)				
	In analyzing assessment results, we are able to differentiate performance difficulties: lack of schooling/interrupted schooling, second language acquisition, cognitively-based or emotionally based learning difficulties, traumatic experiences, program gaps.				
	We collect accurate and up-to-date background information of recently arrived students, which includes migration and school histories.				
	We provide appropriate ELD programs for students.				
	We routinely research the background of students to determine optimum placement options and appropriate teaching strategies.				
	In making placement decisions for regular classroom and/or Special Education, we recognize the legitimate differences in values, social skills, language, and experiences that exist among students.				
	We take into account racial, cultural, linguistic and class biases in standardized tests when making placement decisions.				
	When necessary, we arrange testing in the language in which the students is most proficient.				
	We provide support for students who have not met the age appropriate standards.				
	We make decisions concerning the placement of students based on their performance and interest, in addition to test scores.				
	We actively involve parents in assessment and placement decisions ensuring translators are provide where necessary.				
	We involve parents as early as possible in working collaboratively with the school.				
	We address the over or under representation of racial/cultural/linguistic groups in special education programs.				
	We assess the over or under representation of racial/cultural/linguistic groups in all school programs.				
School/Community Relations	Wee ensure that all parents/guardians feel welcome and comfortable in the school and we monitor the effectiveness of our efforts.				
	We involve parents/guardians in school-related activities and in the life of the school.				
	We hold parents/guardians meetings in a manner that accommodated their child care, and work schedule needs.				
	We support parent and community initiatives that challenge all forms of discrimination.				
	We involve parents, guardians, and the community in developing our school's equity initiatives.				
	We keep parents/guardians informed and involved in placement procedures, and options related to their children's education by providing appropriate support.				
	We actively seek representation that is reflective of the racial/linguistic/cultural composition of the study body and the community.				
	We seek active parents/guardians/community participation in resolving sensitive issues of equity.				
	We ensure that parents/guardians are aware of their children's rights to participate in all available programs (e.g. optional attendance, schools for the talented).				

Appendix D-3

The Equitable School Self Review- Part Three
(Duran, 2002)

		Never	Sometimes	Usually	What My School Needs To Do
Student Rights	My school helps me to do my best work.				
	I believe I am taking the school program that is best for me.				
	In all my subjects, the textbooks and lessons include people like me and present an equitable portrayal of the global community				
	My school helps me to grow as a person and teachers me that I am an important member of the community				
	My parents/guardians participate, feel welcome and are respected in my school				
	I feel the rules of the school are fair to everyone				
	I respect and follow the school rules.				
	I believe that discipline in this school is fair to everyone				
	I recognize racial, cultural, linguistic, religious, sexual, homophobic and class bias and discrimination when I see it				
	I recognize racial, cultural, linguistic, religious, sexual, homophobic and class discrimination when I see it				
	I recognize racial, cultural, linguistic, religious, sexual, homophobic and class harassment when I see it				
	I know about the school policy on racial, cultural, linguistic, religious, sexual, homophobic and class harassment				
	If I had a problem with discrimination and harassment I would know whom to talk to				
	My school teaches me that we must all stand up for each other's human rights in the school & community				

Appendix E

Multicultural School Checklist

North Central Regional Laboratory (1995)

Schoolwide Practice:

- Does our school foster understanding and acceptance of cultural differences?
- Does our school acknowledge and treat honestly and fairly the contributions of different cultural groups?
- Do our curriculum materials accurately represent histories, experiences, and contributions of various cultural groups?
- Does our school provide all students equal access to quality educational programs and learning experiences?

Teaching Practices:

- Does our school tap into students' family, language, and culture as foundations for learning?
- Do classroom practices encourage multiple intelligences and reflect an understanding of different learning styles?
- Do our teachers know how to use students' informal home language as a tool for developing formal literacy?
- Do our assessment methods reflect the diversity of students' learning styles, language, and culture?

School-Community Relations:

- Does our school link learning to families and resources in the local community?
- Is our school sensitive to the special needs and cultures of our parents?
- Does our school provide ongoing parent education and training so parents can learn ways to enhance their child's learning at home?

Professional Development:

- Do we provide opportunities for staff to gain knowledge about different cultural groups?
- Do teachers receive training to help them us students' family, language, and culture as foundations for learning?
- Do teachers receive training to help them work with cultural and linguistically diverse students and parents?

Appendix F

Governor Easley Press Release (2004)

Michael F. Easley
Governor

State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

For Release: **IMMEDIATE** Contact: Cari Boyce
Date: September 8, 2004 Phone: 919/733-5612

GOV. EASLEY ANNOUNCES 'LEARN AND EARN' HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM
Provides Job Training and Advanced Degree Opportunities Through Fifth Year of High School

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today announced a new program designed to provide incentive for high school students to remain in school, earn an associate's degree and prepare them for high skill jobs in new and emerging industries. *Learn and Earn* will provide students with the option of a five-year high school program that enables them to earn a high school diploma *and* a community college associate degree while gaining necessary skills to pursue a career in the new economy.

"*Learn and Earn* will change North Carolina high schools so that students receive the skills and training they need for high-skilled, better-paying jobs," said Easley. "If students know that they can graduate with practical job skills and an advanced degree, they will have an additional incentive to complete their degree before entering the workforce.

"*Learn and Earn* will provide a new model of high school that will boost graduation rates, boost college-going rates, and boost the preparedness of our students to work in an economy that demands knowledge, talent and skills."

"We have made great strides over the past several years in increasing our college-going rate, and we now rank in the top six in the country," said Easley. "However, we are still losing too many students between grades nine and 12 who drop out. This plan will give high school students another option that provides them with a marketable degree that prepares them for the workforce."

Learn and Earn will have 15 initial pilots, five of which have admitted students for the current school year and ten additional start-up sites that will admit students in 2005-2006 school year. The Governor plans to expand the program statewide.

"There is a real demand for skilled workers in our transitioning economy," said Easley. "Almost all of the new projects we recruit are looking for workers with at least an associate's degree and it is our job to provide it. Our *Learn and Earn* program will meet that need."

For example, Verizon, Infineon and Harris Microwave Communications Division, which recently announced new locations in the state, prefer additional education beyond high school. Verizon prefers its customer service candidates to have an associate's degree while 50 percent of Infineon's positions require a Bachelor's degree as

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a minimum. The 258 new positions with Harris Microwave Communications Division require at least an associate's degree and in most cases a four-year degree.

"Our schools have done a tremendous job providing rigorous course work to prepare students for college," said Easley. "However, for students who plan on entering the workforce, what is needed is a more relevant educational experience that will prepare them to compete in the global marketplace."

Last year, the Governor announced a record $11 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to North Carolina to start the New Schools Project and create new smaller schools that better prepare students for college and work. The New Schools Project began by launching 8 new Health Science-themed schools in districts across the state in partnership with local hospitals and the health care workforce.

Learn and Earn will build on the work of New Schools Project by pairing community colleges or universities with high schools to create a new model of high school. In these *Learn and Earn* schools, students will earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree from community college or 2 years of university credit toward a four-year degree by the time they graduate from high school.

Along with the [small high school initiative] undertaken with support from the Gates Foundation, Easley's Learn and Earn initiative puts North Carolina at the forefront of efforts in the South as well as nationwide to reform high school education and improve the transition to higher education and the twenty first century workplace.

The five *Learn and Earn* sites are operating this fall in Buncombe, Catawba, Durham, Guilford and Nash counties. The ten additional sites that will open *Learn and Earn* high schools in the next academic year are in the following counties: Anson, Chatham, Cumberland, Davidson, Edgecombe, Iredell, New Hanover, Robeson, Rutherford and Sampson counties.

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Appendix G

Initial Themes/Codes

Social interactions better in Middle College
Understanding, caring teachers in Middle College
Teacher first, curriculum second
Satisfaction
School size
Class size
Self-efficacy
Silence/voice
Spaces/absences
coping
Social class
Inequality
Teacher difference
People were raised different
Connection to some material
Understanding of some cultures
Lack of cultural understanding
Teacher receptivity to all questions
Personal race experiences
Class divisions
Public/private
Wealthy kids-poor kids
Black history teacher
colorblind
Teacher differences
Current events class debates
Racial identify
Class identity
Gender identity
First communication with Whites
Uncomfortable discussions
Teacher preferences
Assimilation
Risk
Group identify
Black people in curriculum
Pro White-pro Black
Helpful teachers
Teachers make the difference
Relationship with tutor
No put downs about race, etc.
No race discussions

Desire to belong
Biased textbooks
Lack of Blacks & Hispanics in textbooks
Memories of Things Fall Apart
More staff diversity
No more staff diversity
Racial conflict at traditional high school
Teacher expectation for student equality
Teachers answer all questions
Absence of race
Teachers just do their job
Hispanic teacher
Black teacher
Culture in Spanish class
Avoid race
Student dress and social class
Student dress and culture
Good vs. evil in Humanities class
Group identity in traditional high school
Group identity in Middle College
Individual identity
Important events
Avoidance
Civility

Appendix H

Revised Themes/Codes

CURRICULUM
(Domain #1 Content Integration)
(Domain #3 Knowledge Construction Process)
Bias recognized
Bias ignored
Teachers provide supplementary materials
Students change curriculum conversation to relationship conversation

RELATIONSHIPS
(Domain #4 Prejudice Reduction)
(Domain # 5 Empowering School Culture and Structure)
Most significant factor
Caring, supportive teachers
Expectations for equality
Notion of being colorblind
More evident than curriculum relevance

TEACHING METHODS/LEARNING STYLES
(Domain #2 Equity Pedagogy)
Teachers readily modified instructional practices
Students freely asked questions and sought help
Teacher care ethic

DIVERSITY
Need to diversify curriculum content
Need to maintain staff diversity
Color of good teachers does not matter

Guilford County Schools

2005-2008 School Improvement Plan

The Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown

Approvals

Approved by Staff:

Date of Approval by Staff: 8-14-07 Results (% Approval): 100%

Principal's Signature: On File Date: 8-14-07

Approved By Division of Academic Improvement

Instructional Improvement Officer's

Signature: On File Date:

Approved by GCS Board of Education Date:

Date Revised: 8/14/07

Principal's Signature: Tony Watlington

Instructional Improvement Officer's Signature: On File

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vision Statement

District's Mission Statement:

Students will graduate as responsible citizens prepared to succeed in higher education or the career of their choice.

School's Vision Statement:

The mission of The Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown is to provide rigorous, relevant, engaging instruction and positive relationships to eliminate failures, suspensions, and drop outs ensuring that 100% of our diverse students graduate in four or five years with an associates degree or some college credit.

To lead us toward our mission, our school community shares the following beliefs:

It is our belief that our entire staff and community are committed to working with every student to provide a smaller learning environment where each student's talents, interests, and individual needs are recognized. With every student, we will find the learning style that provides the best avenue for success. In addition to a focus on academic achievement, it is incumbent upon us to provide the student support that was not as apparent in the traditional high school.

Utilizing our small school size, we will provide a nurturing environment where we will get to know each student and his/her family while providing counseling-based support that will help the student deal with a variety of social and family issues. With consideration for the internal issues that students have to deal with, it is our belief that focusing on students first will eventually lead to success in the academic area.

The Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown has a mission of focusing on the disengaged student. It is our contention that our school will provide a valuable resource and alternative for the fifteen high schools in Guilford County. It is our belief that we will be able to help each student in career counseling by improving his/her academic standing in the core courses and provide an avenue for taking college courses.

School-Community Profile

The Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown was the first Middle College High School in the state of North Carolina (along with Greensboro College Middle College) and is entering its seventh year. GTCC Middle College-Jamestown began in 2001-2002 and has track –record of impressive accomplishments. The school was created to address the needs of students who are capable, but who did not fit into the traditional high school environment. The target population includes students who may fall under the following categories: dropped out or considering dropping out of school, abuse, dysfunctional families, isolated within the school population, runaways, or some type of instability in their lives that makes completing traditional high school unlikely.

The Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown is a school, not a program. It is organized and staffed to help students address their problems and to help get students back on an academic track and prepare them for graduation and continued life-long learning.

Average class size is 15 students per class and the small school of 135 students is served by a full time guidance counselor and principal. Teachers at the school have been described as "caring, second chance" teachers. The school draws its culture that of the host college. In short order, students begin acting like and thinking of themselves as "college" students. The students follow the rules and regulations of the college. Rules are few, and the responsibility for self-control is great. During the past school year 0 fights and 0 suspensions were reported by the school.

Because of high success in previous years, the school was selected as a "Learn and Earn" middle college high school during the 2004-05 school year. The school was selected as pilot acceleration site for the governor's new Learn and Earn initiative. The specific Learn and Earn goals are to:

- Continue the process of designing curriculum and support structures that ensure the attainment of an associate's degree and/or two years of transferable college credit at no cost to the student;
- Develop a plan to serve a diverse population of 135 students in terms of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, academic ability, achievement, and motivation (comparable to district level demographics);
- Incorporate work based learning experiences and internships for every student;
- Design and implement affective and academic systems of support to help students attain the high expectations presented by the early college model;
- Partner with middle schools to prepare rising freshmen for the early college experience.

It is the expectation that the Middle College will serve as one of five innovative smaller high school models across the state of North Carolina. The principal and faculty recognize the need to both strengthen the parent boosters organization and to recruit aggressively in order to continue to diversify the student body.

Our Successes from 2003 through 2007 include the following:

- Student Support: Implemented House Student Advisory
- Staff Development: Participated in extensive staff training in cooperative group learning & differentiation strategies
- Equity: Increased economically disadvantaged, ethnic, and EC students by 300%
- Attendance: Increased student attendance from 88.1% to 96%
- Graduation Rate: Increased graduation rate from 83.1% to 89.3%
- Drop outs: Decreased dropout numbers from 31 to 1
- AYP: made to AYP each year from 2004-2007 (while our subgroups increased from 2 to 5)
- EOC proficiency scores (overall) increased from 43% to 70.3%
- Asset/Compass college placement tests: 80% of juniors and 85% of seniors have passed Compass/Asset test(s)
- ABCs Growth: In 2006-2007, out of 112 schools in the district, our school had the third highest average growth calculation (This is the average of individual growth for the school. Minimum expected growth is 0.00). Out of 112 schools in the district, our school also had the second highest change ratio (This is the ratio of student scores that meet the individual standard to those that do not. The minimum for high growth is 1.5).

Our growth challenges/opportunities during the 2006-2007 school year:

- Overall EOC proficiency scores dropped from 77.1% to 70.3% in 2006-2007 due primarily to lower math EOC proficiency scores.
- SAT average scores dropped from 1537 to 1399 in 2006-2007.

Our goals for the 2007-2008 school year:

- Increase student attendance: from 96% to 96.5%
- Increase Graduation Rate from 89% to 100%
- Decrease number of drop outs from 1 to 0
- Make AYP
- Increase overall EOC proficiency from 70.3% to 80%
- Increase percentage of juniors and seniors who pass college placement test to 80/85% 90%
- Increase SAT scores by 100 points (from 1399 to 1499).

To achieve these goals, our faculty has identified four instructional strategies to fully engage our students in learning:

- Cooperative Group Learning/Graphic Organizers (80/20 Rule)

- Differentiation Strategies
- Use of Data to Drive Instruction (by subgroup)—see attached 2006-2007 EOC goal summary reports and EOC data from 2003-2007
- Maximize time

To achieve these goals, our faculty has identified two student support strategies to fully engage our students in learning:

- Revamp House student advisory to increase student support
- Model expectations for students (enthusiasm, high expectations, positive communication)

The principal, New Schools Instructional Coach, and Instructional Improvement Officer (IIO) will visit classrooms and other areas of campus regularly to identify evidence of these instructional and student support strategies and to provide feedback to staff and principal.

Goals, Strategies, Monitoring and Budget

1: Instructional Program

Goal(s):

1. To meet AYP goals in graduation rate, Algebra I, and English 9.
2. To improve student performance in all EOC tests.
3. To eliminate the gap between minority and majority students
4. To continue a data driven, school-wide tutorial service (AVID) to enhance student performance in Big 5 EOC courses.
5. To increase the number of students who take college classes (by increasing pass rates on college admission exams and the SAT)

Objective(s):

1. Graduation rate will exceed 90 percent.
2. Overall student proficiency rates will meet Expected or High Growth under the NC ABC's Accountability Plan.
3. There will be a gap of no more than 8 percentage points between minority and majority students in 2006.
4. All students whose grades are "C" or below will receive help during school tutorials and small flexible group sessions from their teachers and tutors.
5. All students will participate in SAT prep and/or college placement test prep in AVID classes (The school has a major focus on ensuring that all students pass GTCC college placement tests, since entry to these courses is based on the college placement test, not the SAT.

ACTION PLAN

Achievement Data	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007		2007-2008	
	Target	Results	Target	Results	Target	Results	Target	Results
Algebra I	60.0	50	70.0	75	80.0	46.2	60	
Algebra II	60.0	78.2	70.0	73.0	80.0	53.7	60	
Geometry	60.0	43.0	70.0	69.2	80.0		60	
Biology	60.0	75.0	70.0	64.6	80.0	78.4	80	
Chemistry *	60.0	55.9	70.0	68.0	N/A	N/A	80	
Physical Science *	60.0	66.6	70.0	78.6	N/A	N/A	80	
Physics *	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
US History	N/A	N/A	70.0	78.1	80.0	80.4	85	
Civics	N/A	N/A	70.0	80.6	82.5	93.8	85	
English 1	60.0	N/A	70.0	94.4	95.0	84.4	85	
Writing	60.0	40	70.0	81.5	90.0	62.5	80	
SAT	N/A	N/A	N/A	1573(37.5%)	14701	1399(35.5%)	1449(20%)	

2004-2005 Total School ABC Composite Score 61.9%
2005-2006 Total School ABC Composite Score 77%
2006-2007 Total School ABC Composite Score 70.3%

Strategy/Action (What will we do?) List (C) as a continuing strategy and (NI) as a new and innovative strategy.	**C/ NI**	**Timeline**	**Person(s) Responsible**	**Budget/ Source**	**Professional Development**	**Desired Outcome**	**Code** (HSTW or SACS)
Use engaging instructional strategies that encompass key chosen strategies and Best Practices	C	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	Instructors	School	Fullan Training (20 hours on site)	80% overall EOC student proficiency	SACS
Incorporate best practices of high performing middle colleges from across the country (design principles)	N	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	Math teachers	School	In/Out of State School Visitations	Increase math EOC scores to 60%	SACS
Incorporate reading comprehension skills into daily instruction in English, history, science and math classes	C	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	Instructors	School	Reading Across the Curriculum	10% Score Increase in English and History	SACS
Implement SAT Coach into regular classroom instruction, Freshman Seminar, and Guided Studies classes	N	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	SAT Prep Teacher	School	District-Level Training	50 point increase in SAT scores	SACS
Administer and Analyze Benchmark Tests to address student academic deficits	N	4th, 9th, and 13th week	Principal, Instructors, Coaches, & IIO	School & District	District-Level Training/Coach	80% overall EOC student proficiency	SACS
All staff will participate in 20 hours of Fullan training to increase teacher effectiveness relative to curriculum planning	N	Early release and teacher workdays	Instructors & on-site Teacher Facilitator	School & District	Fullan Training School-Level Staff	80% overall EOC student proficiency	SACS

Goals, Strategies, Monitoring and Budget

2: Culture for Learning

Goal(s):

1. To provide a safe, orderly, and inviting learning environment with support systems that help each student perform to his/her potential.
2. To provide a nurturing environment where each staff member will develop positive personal relationships with each student.

Objective(s):

1. There will be no more 0 suspensions during the 2007-2008 school year.
2. Students will receive documented counseling support to help deal with a variety of academic and social issues.
3. Students (who come from all 14 traditional high schools) will participate in a variety of activities to build self-confidence, self-esteem, and to improve teamwork skills.
4. Daily student attendance will increase to 96.5 percent as evidenced by the SIMS attendance report.

ACTION PLAN

Data (Related to Stated Goal)	2004-2005	2005-2006		2006-2007		2007-2008	
	Results	Target	Results	Target	Results	Target	Results
Attendance Rate	91%	92%	94.6%	95%	96%	96.5%	
Out-of-School Suspensions (Total)	1	4	1	0	0	0	
In-School Suspensions (Total)	0	0	1	0	0	0	
Retentions	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Early Leavers (High School)	12	6	2	2	1	1	

Strategy/Action (What will we do?) List (C) as a continuing strategy and (NI) as a new and innovative strategy.	**C/ NI**	**Timeline**	**Person(s) Responsible**	**Budget/ Source**	**Professional Development**	**Desired Outcome**	**Code** (HSTW or SACS)
Ongoing communication between school/home. Teachers will maintain a parent contact log	C	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	School-Level Stakeholders	School	N/A	Increased Student Attendance and Performance	SACS
Focus staff development on actively engaged students (Fullan stratg./differentation)	N	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	Instructors, Counselor	School	Teacher Leaders	Meet AYP and ABCS growth targets	SACS
Revamp House Advisory Groups where each staff member adopts 9 students to closely monitor & support	N	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	Counselor, Instructors	School	School-Level Staff Development	Increase Student Esteem, Attendance, and Performance	SACS
Incorporate 6 National Middle College Design Principles	N	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	Entire School Staff	School	In/Out of State Learning Visits	Increase Overall Effectiveness of School Program	SACS
Monitor attendance rate and out-of-school suspensions	C	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	Principal, IIO, SSO	School	N/A	Improved attendance rate, decrease in suspensions	SACS

Goals, Strategies, Monitoring and Budget

3: Community Involvement

Goal(s): To increase involvement of all school stakeholders (students, parents, college community, school staff, and broader community) in school-based decisions to improve student performance and attendance.

Objectives:

1. Strengthen partnership between Guilford County Schools and Guilford Technical Community College via monthly High School Innovation Leadership Team meetings (principal, IIO, college liaison, guidance counselor, career counselor, New Schools Project coach)
2. Increase school-parent communication by bi-monthly use of Connect Ed phone system.
3. Increase opportunities for parental involvement through regular attendance at monthly parent booster meetings.
4. Increase communication between college and school faculties by allowing time for group dialogue on each faculty meeting agenda.
5. Convene ongoing parent conferences to discuss student attendance and performance (documented in principal's and teacher's parent contact log)
6. Maintain high levels of faculty voice in decision making by following the "Democratic School Governance" design principle (measured by end-of-year faculty survey)

ACTION PLAN

Data (Related to Stated Goal)	2004-2005	2005-2006		2006-2007		2007-2008	
	Results	Target	Results	Target	Results	Target	Results
Volunteers (hours)	10	25	27	30	40	40	
Opportunities for Parental Dialogue/Participation	12	24	28	50	61	70	
Parent-teacher-Student conferences	85	135	140	135	145	135	
Attendance at monthly parent booster meetings	20 avg	50 avg	55	60	115	80	
Home visits/phone calls	150	300	325	300	352	360	

Strategy/Action (What will we do?) List (C) as a continuing strategy and (NI) as a new and innovative strategy.	**C/ NI**	**Timeline**	**Person(s) Responsible**	**Budget/ Source**	**Professional Development**	**Desired Outcome**	**Code** SACS)
Continue monthly High School Innovation Leadership Team meetings	C	Monthly	Principal, IIO, college liaison, NSP coach	Learn and Earn	Learning visits to model middle colleges	Increase communication and collaboration	SACS
Increase school-parent communication by bi-monthly use of Connect Ed phone system.	C	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	Principal	GCS	N/A	Increased communication	SACS
Increase opportunities for parental involvement through regular attendance at monthly parent booster meetings	C	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	All Staff/ Parent Booster Officer	Booster	N/A	90 percent of parents attend at least 2 meetings	SACS
Implement a graduate series of work-based learning experiences for students	N	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	Career Counselor	Learn & Earn	Learning Visits to model schools	Better Prepare students for college and career	SACS
Partner with middle schools to prepare rising high school freshmen for the middle college experience	N	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	Counselor Principal	School	Vertical Team Training	Increase Student Achievement	SACS
Ongoing inclusion of parents in site-based decision making on school improvement through PTA meetings and socials	C	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	Principal Teacher	School	N/A	Increase parent-involvement	SACS
Utilize college level faculty/staff to volunteer in individual classrooms and provide academic and non-academic support for students	C	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	College Liason	School	N/A	Improve Overall Student Performance	SACS

Goals, Strategies, Monitoring and Budget

4: Management

Goal(s):
To establish policies and procedures that foster effective and efficient operations in allocation and management of school budget, school safety, staff and home communications, and scheduling,

Objectives:

1. Develop clear policies, procedures, and expectations which will be printed in the staff and student handbooks.
2. School staff will consistently follow established policies and procedures and will make adjustments when warranted by unique circumstances.
3. The principal and office staff will maintain a high level of accountability for appropriate use of financial resources with a priority on improving academic achievement.

ACTION PLAN

Strategy/Action (What will we do?) List (C) as a continuing strategy and (NI) as a new and innovative strategy.	**C/ NI**	**Timeline**	**Person(s) Responsible**	**Budget/ Source**	**Professional Development**	**Desired Outcome**	**Code** SACS
Student and staff handbooks will be distributed/discussed during the first week of school	C	First Week of School	Principal House Advisors	School Magnet	N/A	No more than 2 suspensions	SACS
Principal will maintain open communication with faculty/staff through publication of ACHIEVE newsletter bi-monthly (or as needed)	C	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	Principal	Office of the Principal	N/A	Documented written communications-high staff morale	SACS
Student/staff will maintain open communication re school issues via weekly advisor/advisee meetings (House) and parent contact logs	N	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	All Staff	Learn & Earn	Learning Visits to Model Middle Colleges	High student morale as evidenced by survey	SACS
Principal will send bi-monthly Connect Ed phone messages to keep parents informed about school operations	C	Aug '07-May '08 (bi-monthly)	Principal	GCS	N/A	Informed and active parents/guardians	SACS
Teachers will use Fullan strategies to maintain high levels of student engagement to prevent classroom management problems	N	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	Teachers	GCS Learn & Earn	Fullan Training (20 hours on site)	High time on task/Increased test scores	SACS
The principal and counselor will maintain high levels of visibility in classrooms and hallways during school hours to prevent discipline issues	C	Aug '07-May '08 (ongoing)	Principal Counselor	N/A	N/A	0 fights/ Minimal tardies/Student feel safe	SACS

SAT PLAN

Comments: The Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown has a two year associates degree component under the Governor's Learn and Earn initiative. The initiative requires students in grades 9 and 10 complete a two year associates degree program and a high school diploma in four years (with a fifth year option for some students). Some Middle College students are not required to complete a degree but the school has set a goal of all upper classmen students to take at least one college course each semester. Because the only prerequisite for admission to college courses is a passing score on the college placement test (Compass or Asset test), students generally do not have high motivation levels to take or to score well on the SAT test. Because many students do not initially view themselves as "college material,I" the school employs two key strategies to increase SAT participation rates and SAT scores. The two strategies are printed below:

Strategy/Action (What will we do?) List (C) as a continuing strategy and (NI) as a new and innovative strategy.	**C / N I**	**Timeline**	**Person(s) Responsible**	**Budget / Source**	**Professional Development**	**Desired Outcome**	**Code** SACS)
All students in grades 9-12 (not yet in college courses) is enrolled in 1st period AVID classes that focus on SAT/Asset test preparation & study skills for Big 5 EOC courses	N	Ongoing	AVID Teachers counselor	District	SAT & Asset Test Training AVID teachers	-90 percent of juniors and seniors will pass placement test (with a 100% participation rate) -SAT average score will increase 100 points to 1399 with a 30% participation rate	SACS
SAT coach and Asset test materials will be integrated in English and math courses during the 2007-2008 school year.**	N	Ongoing	Lead SAT teacher/ Teachers Principal counselor	District	SAT & Asset Test Training for AVID tutors/teachers	Same as above	SACS
Summer Bridge	N	June, July 2008	Summer Bridge teachers/	Learn and Earn	SAT & Asset Test Training	Same as above	SACS

			counselor/ principal	grant	for AVID tutors/teac hers		
Individual/small group prep for students already enrolled in college courses	N	Ongoing	Mr. Freeman Ms. Saunders Mr. Ewalt	District	Online SAT prep training provided by district	Same as above	SACS

Appendix N

GTCC-J Application

THE MIDDLE COLLEGE AT GTCC - JAMESTOWN
GRADES 9-12

*Grades 9-12 - Attach Transcript
*Grade 8 - Attach Copy of report Card and copy of EOG Scores

Guilford County Schools

APPLICATION FOR THE MIDDLE COLLEGE AT GTCC - JAMESTOWN
2008-2009 SCHOOL YEAR

Application period is February 1 - March 21, 2008

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS APPLICATION BY PRINTING IN INK.

Name of student _____

Age _____ Date of Birth _____ Sex _____ Race _____

Name(s) of Parent/Legal Guardian _____

Home address _____
(Street)

_____
(City) (State) (Zip)

Parent e-mail address _____

Residence phone _____ Business phone (m) _____ (f) _____

School assignment (by high school attendance zone) _____

School presently attending _____ Grade _____

Expected grade level for 2008-2009 _____

Does the student currently receive special education services? _____ If so, what category? _____

Do you currently have another student enrolled in The Middle College at GTCC - Jamestown program? _____

If so, student name _____ Student's current grade _____

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY: By submitting this application you understand the commitment of effort and time your child is undertaking if accepted into The Middle College at GTCC - Jamestown. This commitment includes agreeing to keep your child in the Program for at least one semester. Further, you will be required to request reassignment at the end of each year for as long as your child is enrolled in the program. If at the end of any high school year your child is unwilling or unable to continue studies in The Middle College at GTCC - Jamestown, she/he will be reassigned to the high school of her/his attendance zone. Also, any attendance or behavior problems will be sufficient cause to rescind any reassignment that may be granted.

_____ Date _____
(Parent/Guardian signature)

Please return this application and transcript no later than March 21, 2008 to:

Tony Washington, Principal
The Middle College at GTCC - Jamestown
601 High Point Road
Jamestown, NC 27282
(336) 819-2957

For office use only:
- ○ Student is recommended for The Middle College at GTCC - Jamestown. Grade Level_____
- ○ Student is # _____ on a waiting list for The Middle College at GTCC - Jamestown
- ○ Student is not eligible for The Middle College at GTCC - Jamestown

Reason for ineligibility _____

Signature of The Middle College at GTCC – Jamestown Principal _____ Date _____
(Once signed, Principal should make copy and send original to Student Assignment Office, 120 Franklin Blvd.)

Rev. Date 10-31-07 SAO-F058 Page 1 of 2

STUDENT NAME_____

1. Why would you like to attend The Middle College at GTCC - Jamestown?

2. What is it about your current school situation that you think does not work for you?

3. Tell us about yourself – how would others describe you?

4. What are your strengths/weaknesses?

5. What are your goals for the future (career plans, etc)?

6. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us that will help us get to know you?

Appendix O

GTCC-J Recruitment Brochure

The Middle College at GTCC - Jamestown is a high school specifically for students in grades 10-12 who have the ability to do honors or higher-level academic work. The purposes are:

- To give students an opportunity to enroll in college courses for dual high school and college credit, although they are not guaranteed to complete a two-year associate's degree or two years of transferable college credit
- To serve a diverse student body
- To incorporate career exploration into the curriculum to ensure that students experience relevance in their academic program

Guilford County Schools (GCS) pays for all textbooks as well as the tuition for college-level courses. Transportation is provided. The college environment provides the setting for a student to leave his/her former school and get a fresh academic start. The small size of our school (135 students), individualized attention from caring and highly-qualified teachers and small teacher-to-student ratios (1:15) provide an ideal environment for students to make an exciting and bold new start.

The Daily Schedule

The school operates Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. until 4:45 p.m. and follows the Guilford Technical Community College calendar. High school courses are taught in the Percy Sears Applied Technology Building and college courses are located throughout the beautiful Jamestown campus. Students have access to all college resources including the library, cafeteria and computer labs.

The Application Process

Applicants and parents are invited to visit the campus and observe classes during the school year. Interested students may submit an application that is co-signed by parents/guardians and a transcript, which can be faxed to (336) 819-2961. Students and parents meet with the principal for a discussion and then with a team comprised of staff and students. Each student participates in a required orientation with their parents/guardians, teachers, counselor and principal prior to the first day of classes. Applications may be obtained from all traditional high schools, at The Middle College at GTCC or on the GCS Web site, www.gcsnc.com/magnet.

Our Record

- Named one of five accelerated "Learn and Earn" model high schools by Governor Easley in 2004
- One of 10 Most Improved High Schools in North Carolina in 2003
- Winner of the prestigious N.C. Lighthouse Schools Award in 2002
- With Greensboro College Middle College, was one of North Carolina's first two middle college high schools in 2001
- Celebration of Excellence Most Improved School Award in 2005
- Signature School Award in 2005

The Student

Students from all traditional high schools in Guilford County may apply for admission to The Middle College at GTCC - Jamestown. Students attend classes at the main GTCC campus in Jamestown. Prospective students possess the maturity and independence to accept the challenges of this progressive school. They are academically bright, but may have disengaged academically for a number of reasons. With the help of supportive faculty members, students make a commitment to change those factors that caused them not to be as successful in their traditional high school. The school reflects the diversity of GCS and seeks to make college accessible to more students.

Learn and Earn

Students attend honors level classes from 11 a.m. until 4:45 p.m. daily. As one of five reform high schools in North Carolina selected by Governor Easley's Learn and Earn initiative, the specific goals of The Middle College at GTCC - Jamestown are:

- To create an academically rigorous early college high school serving grades nine through 12
- To serve a diverse student body
- To ensure that students graduate with both a high school diploma and an associate's degree or two years of college credit within four or five years
- To incorporate career exploration into the curriculum to ensure that students experience relevance in their academic program

Appendix P

IRB Participant Telephone Contact Script

Date: March 1, 2008
IRB Study #: 08-0431
Researcher: Tony B. Watlington, Sr.
Dissertation Study: "The Impact of a Multicultural Curriculum upon Student Achievement: Perceptions of Potential Dropouts Who Graduated From North Carolina's First Early/Middle College High School"

Researcher:
"Hello, may I speak with *potential participant*?"

Researcher:
"This is Tony Watlington, a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I am contacting you today to ask if you will participate in my dissertation research study. Do you have a few minutes to talk about it?

Student:
"No."

Researcher:
"Okay, I understand. I appreciate your time."

-OR-

Student:
"Yes."

Researcher:
"Thank you. The title of my dissertation study is 'The Impact of a Multicultural Curriculum upon Student Achievement: Perceptions of Potential Dropouts who Graduated from North Carolina's First Early/Middle College High School.' There will be 10 participants in this study who are graduates of the school. Since early/middle college high schools place emphasis on recruiting under-represented and/or first generation college students, your participation will provide important feedback to teachers, school administrators, policy makers, and researchers about how these schools and their curricula can best serve students. Do you have any questions?"

"Is it okay to mail you a copy of the participant consent form, and if so, may I have your email and/or mailing addresses? Do you have any questions at this time? (answer any questions) Once you receive this information, call me with any questions. My contact information is on the consent forms. Thank you for your time."

Appendix Q

IRB Participant Consent Document

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Adult Participants
Social Behavioral Form

IRB Study # 08-0431
Consent Form Version Date: 12/10/07

Title of Study: The impact of a multicultural curriculum upon student achievement: perceptions of potential drop outs who graduated from North Carolina's first Early/Middle College High School.

Principal Investigator: Tony B. Watlington, Sr.
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: Doctoral Student. Educational Leadership
UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 1-336-215-9727
Email Address: twatling@email.unc.edu
Co-Investigators: N/A
Faculty Advisor: Dr. William Malloy
Associate Professor, Educational Leadership
Funding Source: N/A

Study Contact telephone number: 1-336-215-9727
Study Contact email: twatling@email.unc.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to learn about former students' perceptions of a multicultural curriculum at North Carolina's first Early/Middle College high school. In North Carolina, statistics show that only 68 out of 100 ninth grade students graduate from high school in four years (New Schools Project, 2003). In 2001, the Guilford County School district opened the state's first middle college high school to reduce the drop-out rate. The school originally served only 11th and 12th grade students but now serve students in grades 9 through 12. The school was a middle college from 2001-2004 and became an early/middle college blend from 2004 to the present. Middle College high schools are located on college campuses and enroll students in grades 11 and 12 who may take some or no college courses Early college high schools are located on college campuses and enroll students beginning in the 9^{th} grade with an expectation that all students will earn 2 years of college credit or an associates degree within five years.

These non-traditional high schools are designed to decrease suspensions and drop outs, to increase four graduation rates, and to prepare disengaged and underrepresented students for college. Over the past six years, middle and early college high schools have spread across the school district and the state of North Carolina. In 2004, Governor Mike Easley created the New Schools Project and Learn and Earn initiative to create middle college high schools across the state. Because these schools were designed to accept students in grades 9 through 12 instead of the 11^{th} or 12^{th} grades only, the New Schools Project named many of the new schools "early college high schools."

You are being asked to be in the study because although you were at risk of dropping out of high school, you successfully graduated from the Early/Middle College at GTCC-Jamestown. Since both of these schools place emphasis on recruiting under-represented and first generation college students, your participation will provide important feedback to teachers, school administrators, policy makers, and researchers about how these schools and their curricula can best serve students.

How many people will take part in this study?

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 12 people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?

If you participate in this study, you will answer 15 student interview questions that will last approximately one hour. The student interview will take place at school during non-instructional class time in a private office or classroom. If more time is needed to answer all of the questions, an additional 30 minute interview will be scheduled if you choose to continue participation.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you participate in this study, an interview time will be scheduled between March 17 and 25, 2008. The researcher will explain the project and you will answer student interview questions only if you are willing to do so. Because participation in this study is voluntary, you may withdraw from this research project at any time and for any reason. You may also refuse to answer any question.

All interviews will be conducted by the researcher and are expected to last approximately 1 hour. If more time is needed to answer all of the questions, the interview will be extended for an additional 30 minutes. The interview sessions will be audio-taped.

Your interview responses will be kept in a locked office and a password protected database. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants to protect their confidentiality. At the conclusion of the research project, the researcher will destroy all notes and responses provided by you. Protecting your confidentiality is of utmost importance to the researcher,

At the conclusion of the research project, a summary of results will be made available to all participants. Should you have any questions or want to request further information, please contact me at (336)215-9727, email me at twatling@email.unc.edu, or you may contact Dr. William Malloy, faculty advisor, at (919)962-2510, or email him at wmalloy@email.unc.edu.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You may not benefit personally from being in this research study. However, since very limited information exists about the viewpoints of Black students enrolled in early or middle college high schools, your perspectives will help teachers, school administrators, policy makers, and researchers who are concerned with decreasing high school drop outs and increasing four year graduation rates.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

There are no know risks associated with participating in this study. There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to the researcher.

How will your privacy be protected?

Student interviews will be audio-taped then transcribed into a written document. If you do not want to be audio-taped at any time during the interview, the researcher will turn off the recorder and continue the interview while taking written notes. Anonymity of all responses is guaranteed by the researcher. Pseudonyms for participating students will be used to protect participant confidentiality.

The audio cassette tapes, written transcriptions, student interview notes, and school records provided by the principal will be kept in a locked office and in a password protected database until the end of the research study/approval of the researcher's dissertation. The researcher and faculty advisory will be the only persons that will see your information. At the conclusion of the research project, the researcher will destroy all notes and responses provided by you and your school records information.

You will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is

very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?
You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
There will be no costs for being in the study

What if you have questions about this study?
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

- -

Title of Study: The impact of a multicultural curriculum upon student achievement: perceptions of potential drop outs who graduated from North Carolina's first Early/Middle College High School.

Principal Investigator: Tony B. Watlington, Sr.

Participant's Agreement:
I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Check the line that best matches your choice:

_____ OK to audiotape the interview
_____ Not OK to audiotape the interview

_____ _____
Signature of Research Participant Date

_____
Printed Name of Research Participant

_____ _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

_____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

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